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Comment

Not only New York and Washington, where suicide bombers crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, but all of the Western world has been in shock. One man whose windows used to look out on the World Trade Center said, "I've seen all these horror movies, but today's was real." To others, like myself, who lived through some of the real horrors of World War II, the United States was perceived as the safe haven. On December 7, 1941, President Roosevelt addressed the nation to announce that Japan had destroyed over half of our fleet at Pearl Harbor; and that we were determined to fight. He spoke more elegantly than President Bush did on September 11, 2001, but they both sent the same forceful message.

Once again, the United States is not truly prepared to fight its enemies, but is resolved to root them out. Once again, we are divided around domestic priorities and must fight enemies both outside and within our borders. Isolation of ethnic and racial communities no longer is an option: we saw on our television screens that diversity has become the reality and that, racial theories notwithstanding, the workers at the World Trade Center stood together and ran away together.

But our country will never be the same. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it the mythology of a sublime socialist future, we, as the only superpower, have been blamed for all the evils and miseries that exist in the world. We have attempted to right many wrongs, but at times have overreached our capacities and at other times might have acted sooner, or differently.

We have tried to attain our ends while holding on to our liberal values. However, to defend ourselves against terrorist warfare, we will have to strengthen the CIA, the FBI, the police and other security forces rather than continue to weaken them. How to do so without allowing them to go overboard is a big question. We will have to decide at what point the rights of individuals must be subordinated to the public good, to the "rights" of the counry. When do we go after the Osama bin Ladens and potential terrorists inside and outside the United States in order to prevent future disasters? And how do we conduct fair trials without being so overly "fair" as to encourage, or condone, more such activities?

All of the above dilemmas are part of the Western values we take for granted. Thus we often forget that human life is not as sacred everywhere as it is in our civilization. In societies where children are taught that suicide bombers will end up in a glorious heaven, and where people can dance in the street and celebrate the killing of others, our values are worthless.

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JAY MARTIN

John Dewey and the Trial of Leon Trotsky

JOHN DEWEY'S INVOLVEMENT in the 1937 trial of Leon Trotsky was complex, revelatory of John Dewey, and also illuminating of the troubled relations between American liberals and the Soviet state in the 1930s. An account of the trial conveys in the most vivid way the character of John Dewey—his personality, his commitments, his ideals, and the way he acted upon them. But, equally important, this trial forms a crucial episode in the history of modern American liberalism, particularly concerning the relation of liberals and progressives to the Russian Revolution. Finally, the relation between Dewey's intellectual values and his commitment to social action—his understanding and advocacy of society-based democracy—emerged powerfully in this incident.

The most dramatic year in John Dewey's life was certainly 1937.

But the events that led up to his singular experiences in this year started, of course, some years earlier.

The death of Lenin in 1924 led to a struggle for supremacy in the Soviet Union between Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Stalin's shaky victory in this contest led to the exile of Trotsky—first to the Chinese frontier, then to Turkey, next to France, and finally to Norway—each move an attempt by Trotsky to find some spot safe from Stalin's increasing paranoia.

In Mexico, throughout the thirties, President Cardenas had followed the generous practice of granting admission to political refugees, and Trotsky looked to Mexico as a possible political haven. Besides, in Mexico the Trotskyist wing of the Party was fairly strong, and Trotsky received an invitation from Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, great painters but naive Trotskyists, to stay at their house in Coyoacán, at the edge of Mexico City. He fled there.

Meanwhile, the Moscow trials had begun. Stalin was consolidating his power, and anyone even tangentially associated with Trotsky became an enemy of the people. Zinoviev and Piatakov and their followers were rounded up and accused of plotting against Stalin; a more important figure, Bukharin, was next. Stalin's Minister of Justice, Andrei Vyshinsky, conducted the trials. "Confessions" were followed rapidly by executions.

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Then Vyshinsky announced: "Leon Trotsky and his son Sedov, having been exposed by the evidence in the present case and having directly and personally guided terrorist acts against the Soviet State, are subject to immediate arrest and trial." By the time the trials were over, of those who had once composed the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the USSR, only Stalin and Trotsky were left. Vyshinsky brought forth the ultimate charge: Trotsky had plotted to assassinate Stalin and bring Germany and Japan into a war against the USSR.

Nineteen thirty-seven was an elegiac time for liberals and leftists in America—especially, of course, for Trotskyists. The poet Delmore Schwartz mused sadly:

> It is nineteen thirty-seven now.
> Many great dears are taken away.
> Time is the school in which we learn.
> Time is the fire in which we burn.

But for himself, Trotsky was as full of defiance as ever, and indeed his branch of the Party, rather than being crushed by the Soviet charge, was somewhat invigorated, especially now that Trotsky was safe in Mexico. They were ready for a counterattack against Stalin.

Almost immediately, the French Trotskyists formed a "Comité pour l'Enquête sur le Procès de Moscou" to defend Trotsky. Soon after, the Americans formed the "Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky." Both groups demanded that an international tribunal be formed that would "hear" Stalin's charges and allow Trotsky to defend himself, while he still remained in the security of exile. Obviously, there was no real thought of his returning voluntarily to Moscow for a trial.

Almost at once, wrangling between André Breton and André Malraux broke out in the French group, and no decision could be reached concerning membership on an appropriate tribunal.

So, it was left to the American group to offer Trotsky the hearing that he demanded. The leaders of the American Committee, including the sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross and George Novak, realized that a tribunal consisting entirely of Trotsky sympathizers could scarcely expect credibility on the international stage. What they needed was a group, and especially a chairman, who had an international reputation for fairness, one whose integrity could be accepted by liberals, Soviet sympathizers, and intellectuals everywhere. No wonder that, encouraged by the Marxist philosopher Sidney Hook, their hopes soon fastened upon Hook's dissertation advisor, the seventy-eight-year-old

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American philosopher John Dewey, as the best possible choice for chair. After all, Dewey had been celebrated in the USSR when he went there in 1928; he had been asked by the Socialist Party to run on their ticket for governor of New York State. But he was also quoted every week or so in the moderate *New York Times*; he was invited to the White House for dinner; he was the friend of powerful capitalists; he founded the education and philosophy departments at Mr. Rockefeller's University of Chicago; and at Columbia, he was a favorite of President Nicholas Murray Butler.

Hook was joined by the leading Trotskyist among American writers, James T. Farrell, in persuading Dewey to undertake the responsibility, which meant traveling to Mexico where the hearings were to be held at Rivera's house, as well as reading and absorbing a mass of documents. At first Dewey was adamantly opposed to accepting. He was intent upon finishing his book *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. This book, which is certainly the crown of Dewey's work in the field of logic—and is very likely Dewey's best book—had been occupying him on and off for the previous ten years, in the midst of a mass of other writings on political and social issues, culminating in *Liberalism and Social Action*. Now he was determined to get the logic book finished. Other people, too, tried to deter him. His oldest child, Fred, for instance, was adamantly opposed to the trip, fearful of the effect it could have on his father's health. Once the word leaked out that Dewey was being urged to go, Dewey's friends and acquaintances on the left also spent a lot of energy urging him not to give support to Trotsky, whom they regarded as an enemy of the Revolution. In a letter, Dewey's close friend, Alex Gumberg, advised him: "John, my friend, don't go. I feel justified in trying to urge you again not to ally yourself with the 'dark forces' of the Counter Revolution." No discredit, Gumberg argued, should be allowed to fall upon the glorious Soviet experiment. Malcolm Cowley, the literary editor of *The New Republic*, wrote to Dewey: "I think American progressives of all shades should stick together—they will have to hang together or hang in some other way. Don't be a Charlie McCarthy for the fascist press. The evidence is overwhelming that Trotsky is guilty. We must not injure the cause of liberalism and democracy." Dewey also received death threats, which, by the way, continued long after he returned from Mexico.

Dewey had one more reason *not* to go—he had recently fallen in love with a young lady journalist in her thirties named Roberta Grant. His wife, Alice, had died eight years before, and Dewey had had no serious affairs before this one. But this one *was* serious.

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If all these incentives to refuse did not work, one final one was also bound to fail. Sidney Hook says that one night he was at Dewey's apartment when a well-known radical, an opera singer, arrived. The man said that he had come as an official representative of the Soviet artistic organization Vox. The Soviets, he said, remembered Dewey's earlier trip with pleasure, and they would like him to return for a visit—*all expenses paid*. He stressed that—"all expenses paid"—and he outlined a luxury junket on the Black Sea. Dewey said, "Well, I don't know if this would be an appropriate time for me to visit the Soviet Union because I'm thinking of going to Mexico with the Trotsky Commission." At this point the visitor interrupted—"Trotsky, Schmotsky! We aren't interested in him. We would only like for you to come, to see that wonderful things have happened in the ten years since you were there. But you have to come now. . . .All expenses will be paid by Vox. Yalta, the Black Sea. A wonderful trip." Dewey thanked him, the man left, and Dewey turned to Hook. "Well, that was pretty barefaced, wasn't it?" he asked.

But he decided to accept the chairmanship of the hearing, after all. He was crystal clear about why he was going—it was for his beliefs. Agnes Meyer writes about this time: "John told me he soon realized he had to accept, despite the arduous journey. Wherever the truth might lead, he said, the outcome of the investigation would afford an opportunity for American democracy to reorient itself toward the solution of its own social problems." Nonetheless, Fred kept trying to persuade Dewey not to go. He pursued his father all the way to the train platform, still insisting that it was irrational for him to make the journey. Dewey wrote to Roberta from the *Sunshine Special*, "I tried to answer Fred's questions about why I was going and had to tell him that he was too rational and there weren't any rational answers to his questions in a world as irrational as this one."

Thinking of Gumberg and Cowley, he wrote to a friend: "I have spent my whole life searching for truth. It is disheartening that in our own country some liberals have come to believe that for reasons of expediency our own people should be left in the dark as to the actual atrocities in Russia. But truth is not a bourgeois delusion, it is the mainspring of human progress."

When it was learned that in 1937 Dewey *would* go to Mexico, Edward Ross wrote to Novak: "No one in the country could bring so much prestige to the committee as he can." Dewey's presence on the commission meant that the major papers and even the newsreels would cover the hearing—an extremely important consideration.

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Upon learning that Dewey had accepted and the hearing was to go forward, Trotsky gave a telephone speech to a large audience at the New York Hippodrome, stating flatly: "If this commission decides that I am guilty of the crimes which Stalin imputes to me, I pledge to place myself voluntarily in the hands of the executioner of the G.P.U."

Jim Farrell accompanied Dewey—"Dr. Johnny," he called him—on the train from New York. With him, Dewey had brought Trotsky's complete works, a portable typewriter, and a suitcase full of documents. Even at his age he had immense energy for work; hour in, hour out, he read and wrote on the train, mastering Trotsky's work—and penning letters, sometimes several a day, to Roberta: "Dear Robbie: I love you. . . .What more is there to say? These pages are covered with the words I love you."

The hearing was held at Rivera's in Casa Azul, 127 Avenida Loundres, Coyoacán. The tranquil setting at Casa Azul was deceptive. The sun shone brightly on the purple bougainvillea and the orange trees; ancient stone heads of Olmec gods rested peacefully on the ground. But danger was ever-present. Preparations were made and precautions organized with the utmost care, since it was expected that at any moment an attack on Trotsky or the commissioners might be made. Diego Rivera, looking like a figure in one of his murals, wore ammunition belts slung across his chest, and carried a carbine. Clothed strikingly in a Mexican Indian dress, Frida carried a gun too. An official card of admission, personally signed by Dewey, was required for entrance.

The other commissioners were Karl Marx's biographer, Otto Ruehle, a leader of the German communists who opposed Hitler's rise to power; the labor advocate and writer, Benjamin Stolberg; Carleton Beals, a well-known Latin America expert; and Suzanne La Follette, the editor of *The Freeman* and a member of a well-known progressive family. Other well-known figures in the progressive movement who were in attendance included Carlo Tresca, the anarcho-syndicalist editor of *Il Martello*. John F. Finerty, Tom Mooney's attorney, served as the counsel for the committee. The international press corps was in attendance, along with representatives of major American papers. Soviet authorities were invited to send documentary material and representatives to examine Trotsky; the Soviet ambassador to the U.S., Andrei Troyanovsky, was urged to attend. These overtures were refused.

Surviving newspaper photographs, sketches, and paintings show that the spacious room in which the hearings were conducted was divided into two. On the one side of a barrier sat the Commission and Trotsky. On the other were seats for the press, Mexican representatives of the

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labor movement, and other spectators. The room was always full to overflowing. Diego Rivera sketched Dewey's face—and then slept through most of the hearings.

At 10 a.m. on April 10, 1937, the hearings were opened by John Dewey with these words:

> This Commission, like many millions of workers of city and country, of hand and brain, believes that no man should be condemned without a chance to defend himself. The simple fact that we are here is evidence that conscience demands that Mr. Trotsky be not condemned before he has had full opportunity to present whatever evidence is in his possession in reply to the guilty verdict returned in a court where he was neither present nor represented. If Leon Trotsky is guilty of the acts with which he is charged, no condemnation can be too severe. . . .

Dewey concluded his opening speech with words that the philosopher John J. McDermott says are "worthy of the famous speech by Socrates in the *Apology* of Plato." Dewey said:

> Speaking, finally, not for the Commission but for myself, I had hoped that a chairman might be found whose experience better fitted him for the difficult and delicate task to be performed. But I have given my life to the work of education which I have conceived to be that of public enlightenment in the interests of society. If I finally accepted the responsible post I now occupy, it was because I realized that to act otherwise would be false to my life's work.

With that, the hearing opened, Trotsky made his preliminary remarks: "Esteemed commissioners. The composition of the Commission and the high authority of its chairman exclude the possibility that the investigation would be anything but objective. . . .My duty is simply to try to help it in its work. I will try to accomplish this duty faithfully before the eyes of the world." He did not repeat his offer to return to the USSR for trial should he not be exonerated by the commissioners.

Albert Goldman, appointed to undertake the legal aspects of Trotsky's defense (even though Trotsky needed little assistance), said in his initial statement, "We are determined to convince the members of this commission, and everyone who reads and thinks with an independent mind, *beyond all doubt*, that Leon Trotsky and his son are guiltless of the monstrous charges made against them."

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And so the hearings were begun. All of the thirteen sessions that followed unfolded in pretty much the same way. The commissioners raised various questions concerning the charges against Trotsky. He answered vigorously, evincing a remarkable command of detail and a penetrating capacity for analysis. Despite his heavy accent, Trotsky spoke with exceptional clarity, sometimes even with wit and beauty, and always with impeccable logic, in his own defense. Dewey showed a particular interest in Trotsky's activities with Lenin during the early stages of the Revolution. The investigation into Trotsky's activities since the accession of Stalin was minute.

Lorine Pruette, a journalist who reported the trial, gave a vivid description of the setting:

> As they sit at the green baize table at the head of the long room in the house of Diego Rivera, the order is always the same: Otto Ruehle, former Reichstag Deputy; Carleton Beals, authority on Latin America, who translates the official pronouncements for the impassive Mexican worker delegates sitting at the back of the small, hand-picked audience; Mr. Dewey in the center; Miss Suzanne La Follette, black-haired, white-faced, intense; Benjamin Stolberg, labor journalist. Dewey is quiet, slow-spoken, and quick-witted in Yankee shrewdness. In the audience, crowded with representatives of the press, one person stands out, Frida Kahlo, stately in native costume, with jade beads at her throat, her black hair coiled in loops.

To Miss Pruette, the scene

> might almost be a Ph.D. examination—except for the armed guards at the door and the cordon of police flung around the blue-walled villa; except for the careful checking of guns, even of the commissioners, at their own insistence; except for the windows of what was Trotsky's study, which are not only boarded up but barricaded with heavy adobe brick.

A war of words went on inside the hearing room, as well as outside and around Casa Azul. This hearing was rapidly becoming a catalyst for the conflict between the unbending supporters of the Revolution and those who were skeptical of it. The move that Stalin and Vyshinsky had made to accuse Trotsky of treason so as to render him impotent as a dissenter, since he was beyond their reach, was in danger of backfiring. Trotsky's defense was getting unexpected publicity. The American

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Committee for the Defense of Trotsky very actively issued bulletins, press releases, and announcements on his behalf. It contacted labor unions, sent out publicity materials, and disseminated the details of Trotsky's defense, which soon turned into a wholesale attack upon Stalin as a revolutionary-turned-fascist dictator. All of the defendants in the earlier Moscow trials had made "confessions." Trotsky was more unreconstructed. Never before had a prominent member of the Revolution condemned so fully, in reports so widely distributed, the failure of the Revolution.

The Kremlin mounted a virulent campaign of abuse against the hearings. Communist papers, such as *The Daily Worker* in America, and many leftist journals made a violent attack upon the hearings and its chair. For instance, in *The New Masses*, Marion Hammett and William Smith mocked "the so-called impartial inquiry": "The hearings merely presented a rosy picture of Trotsky while blackening the Moscow defendants who implicated him. The commissioners heard only Trotsky's version. Suzanne La Follette's questions were so biased that even Mr. Dewey had to object." Dewey was attacked as a deluded old man who had once been a friend of the Revolution but now was merely duped by the enemies of socialism. In the USSR, Dewey was charged with being "an enemy of peace and progress."

In the midst of the hearings, a dramatic event occurred. Carleton Beals resigned in protest. It was evident to all that this was a party strategy to shift attention away from Stalin's charges and Trotsky's defense, and to make the Commission itself the subject of controversy. Naturally, as expected, Beals's resignation itself took over the headlines. His criticism of the committee, rather than the substance of the hearings, became the focus of the news. He was ready with a series of announcements. "Thus far," he told the reporters in an evident attempt to discredit Trotsky's damning testimony against Stalin, "no investigation has been conducted, but merely a pink tea party—with everyone but myself uttering sweet platitudes. Trotsky had wings spouting from his shoulders." Beals had the party line down pat, with all the available clichés. "By its Czarist methods," he told the press, "the Commission prevented me from clarifying matters." He himself, he suggested, could question Trotsky effectively, and reveal his counterrevolutionary acts, but only if the Commission were disbanded. But, "until Trotsky is willing to disavow the stupidities of the Commission, he can twiddle his thumbs so far as I am concerned," Beals concluded.

Back in Washington, D.C., Soviet Ambassador Troyanovsky was trying to persuade newsmen that the commission was a "flop"—his

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words—a "put-up job" to rehabilitate Trotsky. Dewey was not just a dupe but a willing tool of the reactionaries.

So the battle raged on, all over the world. Dewey held the hearings together and, by his own evident moral integrity and personal intellectual sincerity and studiousness, kept the tribunal going in the midst of this fury of invective. Bertram Wolfe, who was to become famous for his work, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, as well as for his biography of Diego Rivera and other books, was a young, excited spectator at the hearings. He wrote to another young man, who would eventually be F. Scott Fitzgerald's first biographer, Arthur Mizener: "Here is fine old Dewey, an honest liberal worth all the ultra-revolutionary intellectuals put together, going to school again at the age of seventy-eight, and learning all about the worker's movement, reading everything, [and] asking [all of us] for bibliography, etc."

Dewey, of course, was merely following his usual habits, spending all day in sessions, as he had done at all his teaching jobs, reading voraciously at night, and then preparing long lists of questions for the next day before he went to bed. This doesn't mean, of course, that he had forgotten about, or neglected, Roberta. Here is the beginning of a typical letter in the swirling midst of the hearings: "Dearest darling dear. I feel a big hole in my heart. You can't believe what a constant stay you are to me. . . .It's incredible and beautiful. My own, I fold you in my arms and keep you in my heart. . .you are everything to me." Such romantic openings were often followed by objective accounts of the day's inquiry. Sometimes a bit of gossip would come up—such as Dewey's report of the revelation made by Carlo Tresca, who was in a position to know, that despite the noble defense put up for the innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti ten years earlier, the truth was, Sacco was actually guilty of the crimes he was charged with. Dewey was astounded—but it did not make him swerve from his desire to see justice done to Trotsky. Even though he knew that Trotsky was a ruthless and merciless revolutionary, who perhaps deserved the most severe penalties for his crimes against humanity, the question on the table was more narrow, and concerned only with whether Trotsky was guilty of the crimes charged against him by Stalin. Unlike others, Dewey never wavered in his focus on this one question.

The sessions continued, one after another, comprehensively covering Trotsky's life, his revolutionary and terrorist activities, his associations with Zinoviev, Radek, and the others accused of conspiracy with him, and his activities in France and Norway, when he was charged with plotting against Stalin. Much documentary evidence was introduced.

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Finally, in the last session, Trotsky made a long, impassioned speech in his own defense, accusing Stalin of betraying the revolution. It was the climax of the hearings.

> An American writer complained to me: "It is difficult for me to believe that you entered into an alliance with fascism; but it is equally difficult for me to believe that Stalin carried out such horrible frame-ups." I can only pity the author of this remark. One can understand the acts of Stalin only by starting from the conditions of existence of the new privileged bureaucracy—greedy for power, greedy for material comforts, apprehensive for its positions, fearing the masses, and mortally hating the opposition. Stalin, who was once a revolutionist, became the leader of the new privileged bureaucracy. The moral authority of the leaders of the bureaucracy and, above all, of Stalin, rests in large measure upon The Tower of Babel of slanderers and falsifications erected over a period of thirteen years. This Tower of Babel is maintained with the aid of more and more terrible repressions. These gentlemen buy human consciences like sacks of potatoes. Fortunately, not everybody can be bought. Otherwise humanity would have rotted away a long time ago. Here, in the person of the Commission, we have a precious cell of unmarketable public conscience. All those who thirst for purification of the social atmosphere will turn instinctively toward the Commission. In spite of intrigues, bribes and calumny, it will be rapidly protected by the armor of the sympathy of broad, popular masses.
>
> Ladies and gentlemen of the Commission! Already for five years—I repeat, five years!—I have incessantly demanded the creation of an international commission of inquiry. The day I received the telegram about the creation of your sub-commission was a great holiday in my life. Some friends anxiously asked me: Will not the Stalinists penetrate into the Commission, as they at first penetrated into the Committee for the Defense of Trotsky? I answered: Dragged into the light of day, the Stalinists are not fearsome. On the contrary, I will welcome the most venomous questions from the Stalinists; to break them down I have only to tell what actually happened. The world press will give the necessary publicity to my replies. I knew in advance that the G.P.U. would bribe individual journalists and whole newspapers. But I did not doubt for one moment that the conscience of the world cannot be bribed and that it will score, in this case as well, one of its most splendid victories. Esteemed Commission! The experience of my life, in which there has been no lack either of successes or of failures, has not only not

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> destroyed my faith in the clear, bright future of mankind, but, on the contrary, has given it an indestructible temper. This faith in reason, in truth, in human solidarity, which at the age of eighteen I took with me into the workers' quarters of the provincial Russian town of Nikolaiev—this faith I have preserved fully and completely. It has become more mature, but not less ardent. In the very fact of your Commission's formation—in the fact that, at its head, is a man of unshakable moral authority, a man who by virtue of his age should have the right to remain outside of the skirmishes in the political arena—in this fact I see a new and truly magnificent reinforcement of the revolutionary optimism which constitutes the fundamental element of my life. Ladies and gentlemen of the Commission! Mr. Attorney Finerty! And you, my defender and friend, Goldman! Allow me to express to all of you my warm gratitude, which in this case does not bear a personal character. And allow me, in conclusion, to express my profound respect to the educator, philosopher and personification of genuine American idealism, the scholar who heads the work of your Commission.

At the conclusion of this long speech—in full, it lasted an hour—there was a burst of applause, followed by a hushed silence. The spectators waited for Dewey to speak. Finally, Dewey said softly: "Anything I can say will be an anti-climax. . .the hearings of the preliminary commission of inquiry are now ended."

Of course, they were not ended. The commissioners had to return to New York, sift through the evidence, and make their decision. That would be weeks away.

Following the end of the hearings, Trotsky said to Dewey that for him they had proved that American idealism was not a myth but a reality. "I have realized that American liberalism exists as a fact," Trotsky said to Dewey as he gave him a final embrace in farewell. Dewey responded quickly and graciously, "If all Marxists were like you, Mr. Trotsky, I would be a Marxist." And Trotsky quipped back, "If all liberals were like you, Dr. Dewey, I would be a liberal."

Never one to waste much time on leisure, Dewey boarded the train a few days later, planning to return from Mexico by way of St. Louis. He was fit as a fiddle despite the long, demanding hearings. In fact, he was the only one of the commissioners who had not become sick in Mexico. Dewey never allowed himself to think of himself as aged or feeble. As he boarded the train in Mexico City, one of the accompanying party took his arm to help him up, but he angrily pushed the hand away and skipped up the steps.

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His mind was already on St. Louis, for there he had agreed to deliver a lecture at the Hotel Jefferson to the annual meeting of the American College of Physicians. As we say these days, he compartmentalized, and on the train he "forgot" all about the controversies of the Trotsky trial and sketched out a lecture on "The Unity of Man," which he was to deliver to an audience of one thousand doctors shortly after his arrival.

But he was still on the steps of his car, hauling his luggage and several brightly colored Mexican baskets off the train, when a bevy of reporters crowded around him. What was the outcome of the hearings? they wanted to know. As usual, Dewey, standing on the steps, was patient, smiling. As he answered questions, one reporter remembered that "his sense of humor was constantly in evidence."

"A bad case has been made out against Russia," he told the reporter for the St. Louis *Star Times*. "If the accused are innocent, we have an example of arbitrary exercise of power by a dictatorship. If they are guilty, we have former leaders betraying the cause for which they fought—an evidence of some sort of rottenness in the system itself." He said little about Trotsky—that person was already behind him, and he never dwelt on the past. He wanted the reporters to know that he had followed the news of the day from Mexico, and that he was more interested now in how the Supreme Court could be renovated; he doubted that FDR's court-packing plan could succeed. But Dewey's experience in the Trotsky trial had had an effect, after all. From this time forward, his deep suspicion of the leadership of the Soviet Union was evident. He himself was a socialist at the core of his politics, but after this trial he rejected Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism utterly as the opposite of socialism, whereas most other American liberals continued to regard socialism and communism as closely related. On communism as applied to America, he said definitively to the St. Louis reporter: "the surest way to put this country into Fascist hands is to try to make it communist. For me, however, I have great faith in the common sense of the average American and in democracy and education. I look into the future with hope. If recovery lasts, I'll feel easy; if it doesn't, I'll be afraid of Fascism and war."

Dewey had hardly finished his commentary to reporters and lecturing the physicians when he was on the wing again. He hurried to a rural ranch in Missouri where his daughter Evelyn was living. But he didn't pause long. Soon he was back in New York, mobbed by reporters, giving speeches, attending committee meetings and rallies, appearing on the radio. His press releases were carried in all the major papers. The onslaught against him by Party members and, more broadly, by those

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who declared themselves liberals brought Dewey to the conclusion that American liberalism had become corrupted by the contamination of communism, and loyalty, above all, to the Party. In early May he wrote:

> Unwillingness to face the unpleasant is the standing weakness of liberals. They are only too likely to be brave when affairs are going smoothly and then to shirk when unpleasant situations demand decision and action. I cannot believe that a single *genuine* liberal would, if he once faces the alternatives, hold that persecution and falsification are a sound basis on which to build an enduring Socialist society.

Dewey continued to see himself as a true liberal—but to doubt the claims of professed liberals. On May 10, in speaking to a large audience at Mecca Temple in New York City, and a little later during a radio speech, he expressed his fears:

> One more word. I have spoken thus far of rather political issues. I hope the time is not yet when the cause of elementary justice may not be mentioned. I have all my life, today more that ever, disagreed with the type of political thought represented by Trotsky. I disagreed ten years ago with the political thought of Sacco and Vanzetti. That did not prevent me from resisting to the last the hounding of those two martyrs who died for a crime never proven against them. As an American who believes that no man shall be convicted without an opportunity to defend himself, I could not, despite my pressing personal duties, refuse when asked to serve on the commission which gave Trotsky, our political and philosophical adversary, a chance to speak in his own behalf. That is a motive which, I feel sure, is as valid today for many Americans as it was in the days of our struggle against the persecutors of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Very quickly Dewey and his co-commissioners worked through the transcripts of the hearings and prepared a large volume containing the evidence they had examined. When published, the title of that book was a ringing "NOT GUILTY!"

The evidence of history confirms that the commission judged correctly; Trotsky was certainly not innocent—but of Stalin's charges he was not guilty. The materials released from Khrushchev's time after opening the Soviet archives following the breakup of the USSR demonstrates conclusively that the Moscow trials were frame-ups.

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Trotsky was, of course, elated to hear the news, and at once cabled Dewey: "Warmest greetings to the Chairman whose firmness, vigilance, and high moral authority assured the success of the investigation. Long life, Dr. Dewey!" Trotsky's journal, *The New International*, and his numerous media outlets used the verdict to castigate Stalin and his policies anew.

But Stalin was not finished. Trotsky's son Sedov died in France under suspicious circumstances in February 1938. Hearing the news, Dewey cabled Leon and Natalia his "deepest sympathy in your terrible bereavement." Trotsky cabled back "the warmest wishes for your health and the sincerest admiration for your great personality." At this point, Trotsky himself had but two years to live. In 1940 a flunky for the Soviet Secret Service worked his way into Trotsky's trust and then drove an ice axe into his brain.

Before his death, Trotsky made a mistake with Dewey. Convinced that he had made Dewey a convert to his ideas, or at least a sympathizer with them, he invited Dewey to comment in *The New International* on a lead article which he himself had just written. It was titled "Their Morals and Ours," and appeared in June 1938.

But he was wrong about Dewey. The "Not Guilty" judgment which Dewey rendered was based on Dewey's concept of justice, not on his political or ideological persuasions. At the end of the hearings, Dewey had confided to James T. Farrell: "Trotsky's the most brilliant man I've ever heard talk. . .but he needs a guardian." A brilliant rhetorician, he lacked the guardianship of values. So, when Trotsky asked Dewey to judge him on philosophic grounds, Dewey was unsparing in his criticism of Trotsky's improper conflation of means and ends, contained in Trotsky's central claim: "A means can be justified only by its ends."

This was a favorite Deweyean theme. He began his essay "Means and Ends" by noting that "the relation of means and ends has long been an outstanding issue in morals." Dewey's position was almost directly opposite Trotsky's on this issue. Of course, means and ends are intricately intertwined. In "The Future of Liberalism" Dewey wrote: "The kind of means used, determines the kind of consequences actually reached—the ends in the only sense in which 'ends' do not signify abstractions." But how to adjust the balance of operations between means and ends was the question. In Trotsky's essay Dewey had a concrete case—the kind he liked. By placing emphasis on the means of revolution, Trotsky, not so differently from Stalin, Dewey argued, would achieve the end of a Revolution embodying the means used to achieve it—terror, coercion, control. The means would become the end.

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Dewey, by contrast, put the emphasis on the ends to be achieved, and then reflected upon the means that would, when chosen, achieve the desired ends.

In his reply to Trotsky, he arrived immediately at his central critique:

> Means and ends are certainly interdependent, and one would expect that if the liberation of mankind is the end-in-view, there would follow an examination of *all means* that are likely to attain this *end* without any fixed conception of what the *means* must be. And every suggested means would be considered and weighed and judged on the express grounds of the consequences they are likely to produce. But when Mr. Trotsky finds in the class struggle the "law of laws," the one and only means to human liberation, then the *means become the end.*

(Instead of, for Dewey, the ends determining the means.) That is, if one starts with struggle as a means, the Revolution itself, when achieved, will involve continued struggle. Dewey continued:

> It is tragic to see Trotsky's brilliant native intelligence so completely locked up in an absolute so that means become ends. Orthodox Marxism shares with Orthodox religionism and with traditional idealism the belief that human ends are interwoven into the very texture and structure of existence—a conception inherited from its Hegelian origin. Trotsky is an absolutist, and he is unable to escape from the prisonhouse of absolutism.

Dewey's insistence on the interdependence of means and ends is a crucial point to underline. Indeed, his colleague George Herbert Mead, in a seminar he gave at the University of Chicago in the winter of 1926, referred to it as the "core," the "final statement of Dewey's philosophy." For Dewey, philosophy must be, Mead said, "a criticism of the means in the process (of analysis) which gives us the end of the process . . .philosophy is not *knowledge* as an abstraction—it's a criticism of the methods by which you reach your ends, or results." How we think will lead to *what* we think—and do.

The Trotsky hearings constituted a central turning point in the history of American liberalism. From Jack Reed's celebration of the Revolution through the Palmer Raids, the well-publicized conversion to communism of Lincoln Steffens, the onset of the Depression, to, say, symbolically, the announcement by Edmund Wilson in 1932 that he would vote

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for the Communist candidate for president, American liberalism all but merged with Soviet communism. Only a few Marxist thinkers, such as Sidney Hook, were anti-Soviet. Stalin's mounting of the Moscow trials, dubious though they were, still occurred far distant from America and seemed easily justified by the claim that any means were acceptable that saved the Revolution. But when one of the most revered American liberal intellectuals, John Dewey, announced that after examining the evidence thoroughly he had concluded that Stalin's accusations against Trotsky were false and self-condemning, the public, who seldom agreed with Dewey but always trusted his intelligence and honesty, began to be convinced of the corruption of the Revolution. More important, some American liberals started to question the Soviet leadership for the first time—and that led to an examination of the Soviet experiment. One by one, most American intellectuals began to see the Revolution—so Richard Wright put it—as "the God that failed."

It was a great, historic moment for Dewey, but an even greater demonstration that intellectual honesty, rather than party loyalty, can alter history. Whenever he was asked about his favorite work in philosophy, John Dewey named Plato's *Republic* first. He reread it about every other year. This choice often perplexed his readers. What could Dewey, the instrumentalist, find of value in Plato's idealism?

But the attentive observer of his activities in the Trotsky trial will have no such problem. Clearly, Plato's construction of a commonwealth centered in justice, his tripartite division of the soul, and his description of the nature and responsibilities of the ruler, all appealed powerfully to Dewey's own ego-ideals.

Plato's idealist metaphysics mattered not a bit to Dewey; but his practical ideals meant a great deal. Over and over Dewey stated that for him the search for truth was primary; that in politics this meant a search for justice; that justice had to be realized and ethically enacted in society, among citizens; and that these efforts should be guided by nothing less than rational choice—never by the appetite for power and possessions, or by the quest for party reputation or personal honor.

Naturally and easily—but, as Plato always insists, without desire—the philosopher-king must involve himself in the search for social justice. The Trotsky trial forced Dewey not merely into the role of chairman of a commission, but—much more—into the position of the philosopher-judge and leader who "philosophizes," as Plato says "in a healthy way," always combining justice with prudence, "for in this way a human being becomes happiest."

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Trotsky was Dewey's Thrasymachus. True, he was not guilty of the crimes with which he had been charged—and justice *had* to acknowledge this—but, by employing unjust revolutionary means, Trotsky proved that like Thrasymachus (and Stalin) he ultimately believed that "injustice, when it comes into being on a sufficient scale, is mightier, freer, and more masterful than justice; . . .and the unjust is what is profitable and advantageous."

This trial in Mexico was Dewey's reenactment of Socrates' quest for justice; and Dewey's essay "Means and Ends" completed his up-to-date examination of the flaws in Thrasymachus/Trotsky's views. In the end, Dewey, like Socrates, exhibited the true basis for political choice in rendering a just verdict, unmindful of death threats, attacks on his reputation, pleas from friends and family, or material bribes.

From Athens, across the centuries, to Coyoacán in 1937, the image of Socrates spread its angelic wings to reach across Dewey's life, and to take him in. He lived out here what Plato imagined there, and for one brief time, in the quiet heroism of his own being, made Plato's Republic real.

In his usual way, following the trial, Dewey simply went on to other things. He finished *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* not long after his return, and was already working on *Experience and Education*, *Freedom and Culture*, and *Theory of Valuation*, all of which he published in 1938, at the age of seventy-nine. Ever young, at the age of eighty-six he married Roberta Grant—she was forty-two—and they adopted two young children. Dewey maintained his optimism to the last. When he died at ninety-two, he was writing another big book.

In his long career, the Trotsky trial stood out for Dewey. He told Max Eastman that "it was the most interesting single experience of my life." For us it offers a remarkable revelation of Dewey's character and thought, and of a crucial episode in the history of American political, philosophical, and social action.

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DAVID SIDORSKY

The Third Concept of Liberty and the Politics of Identity

Interpretations of freedom have been perennially contested and continuously changing throughout history even though the idea of freedom has been constant as a rhetorical ideal for human aspirations and as a source of social values. The interpretation of freedom in any particular age can serve as an index of the issues that are central to the political culture: when slavery was ubiquitous, the issue of freedom was focused upon emancipation from slavery; when imperial colonization was a dominating political fact, the question of freedom was formulated in terms of national independence. The great force of the idea of freedom in contemporary political controversy still reflects its fundamental priority derived from the struggle against the blight of slavery in antiquity or from the confrontation with the ravages of imperial domination in the ancient world.

Since the 1960s, the right and the ability to choose to create one's own self, that is, to construct a preferred identity, whether of the individual or of the group, has become a primary interpretation of the idea of freedom. This reinterpretation corresponds to the new politics of identity—where a plethora of liberation movements have found new ways of redefining, asserting, and reinforcing the claims of particular groups as a demand for the realization of freedom. These claims are derived from the chosen or recreated identity of the constituted group, whether that group be ethnic, religious, national, racial, or sexual. Accordingly, the 1960s marked the emergence of a new interpretation of freedom, with decisive implications for redirecting the political agenda for the ensuing decades.

The right to create the identity of the self was to take its place as a third concept of liberty alongside the other interpretations of freedom in the modern period, which had received their paradigmatic formulation in Isaiah Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty." Berlin's interpretation was formulated near the end of the 1950s and represented a rare

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moment of balance in the contest over the priority of each of these concepts that had marked modern European and American history.

The first concept of liberty, termed "negative liberty" by Berlin, identified and demarcated the sphere of the individual from the sphere of political authority. The burden of Berlin's elucidation of the concept of negative liberty was to reassert the ongoing value and legitimacy, through the postwar 1950s, of the traditional liberties of the individual.

Berlin was able to limn the ways through which many of the classic philosophical and religious foundations for the justification of the negative liberties of the individual had been eroded in the ideological and political conflicts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These liberties were no longer granted the status of inalienable natural rights that had marked their secular canonization in the political theories of the founding fathers of liberal democracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nor did doctrines of individual negative liberty retain the widespread support they had once enjoyed as a formulation of the necessary conditions for economic progress through the operation of free markets.

Yet, looking back from the apparent respite afforded by the 1950s at the catastrophes and disasters of modern European history, Berlin's conceptual analysis reinforced the recognition of the role of negative liberty. Whatever its foundational justification, a free political culture required institutions that would provide immunity or protection for the individual from the coercions and constraints exercised by the State or other social authority.

The second concept of liberty, termed "positive liberty" by Berlin, linked the idea of freedom with the concept of self-realization. The individual or group was to be considered free if it could realize its potentialities, and it was not free if either internal inhibiting conditions or environing historical factors placed impediments on self-realization.

This concept of positive liberty could trace its roots to an alternative religious and philosophical tradition of liberty in which a person was not free if his will was not liberated from the compulsions of uncontrolled passion, enslaving addictions, or the shackles of ignorance and false belief. This tradition provides a basis for a conceptual reformulation of freedom as positive liberty in which a person who is not coerced by the State may still not be free. In terms of positive liberty, the sovereign individuals of the modern State were not free if poverty and lack of opportunity or their subjugated status would block their ability to develop their potentialities.

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The political consequences of these two divergent concepts of liberty can be found in the conflict over the social and institutional framework of Western states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Partisans of negative liberty continued to support limitations upon state power, including the maintenance of free market economies without significant governmental control or regulation.

Champions of positive liberty sought to use the power of the state in diverse ways, including intervention on behalf of those classes or groups in the society which they believed to be suffering from coercion as a result of historical societal structures or the operation of free markets. The concept of positive liberty became enshrined in the vision of self-determination of subjected European nationalities and formed part of the ideology of various nationalist and pan-nationalist movements.

In the nineteenth century, the concept of positive liberty became part of the ideological foundations of international socialist movements and enabled their advocacy of egalitarianism to be reformulated in terms of human liberation. Analogously, movements for national independence and sovereignty in the colonial regions of the world adopted the idiom of positive liberty in their self-perception as liberation movements.

Berlin's retracing of the career of these two concepts involved an analysis of the vicissitudes of each. Accordingly, it provided a critical index of the status of freedom in the political world of the 1950s, as well as a sense of the agenda of societies seeking to protect or extend freedom at that time.

Berlin reviewed the two major criticisms of the concept of "negative liberty" which had brought it into disrepute since its beginnings in the rhetoric of champions of natural rights like Locke or Jefferson. One line of criticism, developed within Western liberal parties, seeking to move beyond the defense of individual liberties in the canonic writings of Locke or John Stuart Mill, contended that the rights of the individual should not be a bar to governmental policies which were intended to benefit the weaker or deprived groups of the society. Policies of state intervention could limit individual liberties if the social welfare of large groups were to be enhanced. In the United States, the social legislation of the New Deal represented this type of amendment of the theory of negative liberty. Its ultimate legislative and judicial accomplishment involved the reversal of the classic doctrine of natural rights in the economic sphere that had been defended by the pre-Roosevelt Supreme Court.

The second line of criticism, fostered by Marxism, was that natural rights and negative liberty represented a rationalization for the exploita-

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tive power of the dominating bourgeois and corporate interests against the working class. In that view, when the class structure of capitalist society would be transformed, the conceptual superstructure of capitalist culture, including the very language and concept of negative liberty, would cease to have any function and would wither away. It would be replaced by less individualistic or possessive forms of speech to reflect the solidarity of comradeship and fraternity in a classless and egalitarian society. Despite this formulation of the "withering away" of the need or use for negative liberties, when Josef Stalin decided to promulgate a new constitution for the USSR in the late 1930s, he reverted rhetorically to the idiom of the protection of the rights of the individual. In the immediate postwar period, the decision of the Soviet Union to abstain from voting for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would appear to reflect an approach that is more consistent with Marxist theory. Yet the grounds for this abstention were not the classic Marxist criticism of the language and theory of rights, but that positive liberty was not sufficiently emphasized in the formulation of human rights for economic and social development.

Berlin's historical sketch of the need for balance between positive and negative liberty reasserted the continuing function and need for negative liberty in both liberal welfare states and socialist societies. He did not pursue his defense of negative liberty along the Hayekian line of a necessary connection between a market economy and political liberty. He contended that the potential for the erosion of freedom in the absence of institutions protecting the negative liberties of the individual had been documented in the history of the twentieth century. Berlin was prepared to project this historical lesson into the immediate future, and, taking note of the direction of political change after the Second World War, he warned that a stress upon the value of negative liberty would continue to be necessary for the welfare states, socialist governments, and emerging postcolonial nations.

Berlin reviewed the record of various nationalist movements which had incorporated the concept of positive liberty. The fulfillment of the goals of an integral nationalism, in which freedom was identified with the realization of national sovereignty, had marked the restructuring of European society for more than a century. In Europe, the question of the transition from trans-ethnic empires to sovereign nation-states, with some significant exceptions, particularly in the Soviet bloc, had been completed. The debate had begun to shift toward the need for transnational institutions in light of postwar economic and military realities.

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By the end of the 1950s, the claims for political independence and sovereignty by many countries that had been imperial colonies were rapidly being realized. Thus, Berlin was able to celebrate the fulfillment of positive liberty in the achievement of governments of popular sovereignty in the new nation-states of Asia and Africa. Yet his delineation of the two concepts of liberty provided an implicit argument for the necessity of the countervailing balance of negative liberty. Without institutions and traditions that would protect negative liberties, the promise of the postcolonial states would not be realized.

Berlin's approach to the emergence of socialist states in the twentieth century was characterized by a similar balance, derivable from his structuring of freedom as requiring both positive and negative liberty. He assessed the transformational vision and the utopian illusion of socialist ideologies and recognized the ways in which such a vision could obscure the errors, brutalities, and other abuses of individual rights on the ideologically charted road to freedom. His lecture came within a few years of Khrushchev's public admission of Stalin's crimes, and took special note of totalitarianism with its record of repression and genocide during the 1930s and 1940s. This context heightened the impact of Berlin's formulation of the importance of "negative liberty," even within movements dedicated to social or economic progress.

The international context of the 1950s was marked by the division of the world into two consolidated strategic alliances, as well as by the Bandung effort to develop a Third World neutralist coalition which tilted ideologically toward the socialist bloc. Berlin's delineation of the two concepts of liberty, while avoiding appeasement or endorsement of any political camp, formulated in a non-ideological and nuanced way the stakes for human freedom that were present in international conflict.

While recognizing the basis in human aspiration and human history for a concept of "positive liberty," Berlin asserted the constant, unerodable need for "negative liberty" with its demarcation of the wall that protects or insulates the individual from the forces of coercive power. Thus, the connection between the interpretations of freedom and major sources of political conflict had been identified and clarified as a potential guide to the political agenda of the twentieth century.

In the 1960s, a third concept of liberty related to the changing political agenda achieved prominence within radical movements, both in the West and in developing countries. This different interpretation of human freedom involved a new set of political priorities that shifted the

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focus of concern away from the search for balance between "positive" and "negative" liberty.

A significant change in the understanding and interpretation of human nature differentiates the third concept of liberty from both positive and negative liberty. For both "negative" and "positive" liberty presuppose that the individual or the group possesses or develops a fixed character and a determinate history: The individual has an integral self just as the group is constituted by the given properties which have formed its identity throughout its history. In "negative liberty," it is that *integral* self that is to be protected from governmental intervention or societal coercion. In "positive liberty," it is the historically formed individual or group whose potentialities are to be actualized and whose ends are to be realized. The third concept of liberty, however, was to reject the idea of a given identity of the self or of the group. Instead, it focused on the ways in which the self would be chosen or constructed and group identity would be created or defined. Accordingly, freedom is understood in terms of the rights of the individual and of the group to select, create, define, or redefine their own identity.

The connection between the interpretation of freedom and the agenda of political action since the 1960s is demonstrable. The new politics of identity on such diverse issues as gender, ethnicity, race, nationalism, and multiculturalism has aimed at social transformation based upon the freedom to form new patterns of self and group identification.

The third concept of liberty did not originate as an instrument of the social and political movements of the 1960s, although it was adopted and adapted by them. Like any concept of liberty, its origins can be traced back to ancient myth and metaphor. In particular, the third concept of liberty relates to a tradition which is anti-fatalistic, either because there is a denial that the future can ever be fated, predestined, or predetermined, or because there is an affirmation that the free agent can and should defy the decrees of Fate, regardless of the consequences. Thus, the model of freedom is illustrated by Prometheus in his defiance of the gods, or by Bertrand Russell in *A Free Man's Worship*. Russell described the duty of a free person: "To defy with Promethean constancy a hostile universe, to keep its evil always in view, always actively hated" and "not bow before the inevitable."

This concept of liberty, in which a person's free choice does not depend upon an evaluation of the consequences of his decision, was given philosophical elaboration in existentialist thought. For Martin Heidegger, human beings are differentiated from all other species of beings because they have no essential nature or given ends but are constituted by

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their acts of free choice and arbitrary commitment. The Heideggerian thesis that "Man alone *exists*" involves his deconstruction of the prevailing metaphysical view that human beings, like all other species of animals, possess essential properties. In declaring that humans are existential beings, Heidegger is asserting that only humans exercise free choice, including the choice of the kind of self that they can become. A characteristic existentialist theme is the claim that only human beings are free to decide in favor of suicide, while all other beings are determined to pursue their given biological ends.

To a degree, Heidegger's conception of liberty influenced his political decision to support the National Workers' Socialist Party in the early 1930s. His choice did not represent a utilitarian calculation of the consequences of each of the political options confronting the Weimar Republic. He considered the root of both international communism and international capitalism to be ways in which the capacity for human choice would be subverted by the imperatives of technology. Consequently, national socialism, in rejecting both options, represented a "third way" in which a search for authentic human expression in the political life of the nation could be furthered.

The interpretation of liberty does not univocally dictate any specific political commitment. The existentialist concept of liberty also had a significant role in the ideology of parts of the French Resistance movement against Nazi occupation in the 1940s. This movement portrayed itself as a commitment to resistance against overwhelming power at a time when the successful results or beneficial consequences of such a commitment were not predictable. In Jean-Paul Sartre's play *The Flies*, which was staged in Paris during the Occupation, the hero decides to defy the omnipotent deity, Zeus, in the absurdist belief that the arbitrary exercise of free choice can be carried out in a divinely determined universe. The political implication of Sartre's play was that even if the decrees of the Occupation had the force of the ordainments of Zeus, French citizens could decide to commit acts of resistance.

The interpretation of freedom as the arbitrary exercise of choice reflected the perception of the historical circumstances of resistance to Nazi authority. In these circumstances, it seemed that the consequences of the decision to resist were not calculable, for any act of resistance did not demonstrably represent an incremental step toward the realization of its goal, the overthrow of Nazi power. Further, such acts did not result in predictable retribution against their agents, but could be met by random and disproportionate violence against large numbers of innocent persons, including children.

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Generalizing from this extreme situation, the existentialist concept of freedom serves to vindicate the choice for action, independent of any rational estimation of its consequences or of the probabilities that it will achieve its desired ends. The agent makes the choice of participating or desisting from an action that may well be counterproductive, because he recognizes that he is *engagé* in this situation, and is free to choose. His acts of free choice, even if they are arbitrary commitments which do not reflect the historical givens of the situation or form part of a coherent purposive design, mark the creation of an authentic self.

The commitment to arbitrary choices is an expression of the self through which it becomes an authentic self. The connection between the concept of liberty and the creation of the authentic self can be understood as a continuum between the "given" and the "taken." The sphere of the "given" consists of those features of the individual which are determined by nature, history, and society; the sphere of the "taken" consists of those aspects of the individual or his environment which are open to transformation by the exercise of free choice. The way this line is drawn serves as a general indicator of the distinction between liberalism and conservatism.

For the conservative, the area ascribed to the "given," whether this be the constraints of nature, the burdens of history, or the obligations of a tradition, occupies a crucial portion of the continuum. For the liberal, there is a belief that the choices available to the individual, either in fact or in possibility, extend over virtually the whole of the continuum.

The distinction can be clarified by simple illustrations. In an extremely traditionalist society, for example, the choice of a spouse and the decision for a vocation may be prescribed by the social order rather than taken by the agent. Marriages are arranged for the succeeding generation by the parents, often before the birth of the children. The vocation of a child may be hereditary or given by the vocation of his parent or the group into which he is born. A liberal conception moves the determination of choice of vocation and of spouse away from the obligations or prescriptions of the tradition to the domain of individual choices.

The ascription of nationality or religion provides a second and more controversial example in the continuum of the "given" and the "taken." In both traditionalist or moderately liberal societies, the individual is obligated to accept as a given the religion or the nationality of the family or group into which he is born. The abdication or refusal to accept the obligations of nationality that derive from origins or roots is viewed as treason in a traditionalist framework. The violation of obligation to

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the religious bonds with which one is tied at birth is considered apostasy or a form of betrayal of one's own soul within traditional religions. (The harsh edict against the life of Salman Ahmed Rushdie is not derived from his criticisms of Muslim sancta, which would be judged as blasphemy or heresy, but is based upon the fact that these derogations by a person born into Islam represent the more severe crime of apostasy.)

In tracing the spectrum along the direction of liberalism, the decisions of nationality or of religion are conceived as voluntary choices which may overcome any historical givens in the situation. The transfer of national allegiance or of religious bonds is permissible and even obligatory from a liberal perspective if it reflects the free commitments of the agent. From this perspective, the obligations that are binding by reference to one's nationality or "station and its duties" are to be accepted or rejected in the light of the individual's own sense of moral standards that transcend the historically given condition.

The third concept of liberty emerges even more clearly through sketching the polarity between the liberal and the conservative ends of the spectrum in the context of educating the succeeding generation. The conservative stresses the importance of education as binding the next generation to the traditions and values of its heritage. The liberal emphasizes education as a way of developing an individual who will freely create his own identity. An extreme end of the spectrum from the liberal perspective would assert that just as a child is brought up without an inherited decision on choice of spouse or vocation, he could be raised "neutrally" on options of religion and nationality. Thus, in accordance with the third concept of liberty, the child should be raised "neutrally," without being previously obligated, conditioned, or compelled by a particular tradition, so that he would be free to choose his own national self-identification and his own religious identity.

In a further extension, the third concept of liberty would allow for choices of one's language, gender, genes, or history. Thus, in replacing to the highest degree possible the "given" by the "taken," an educational strategy could be to try to raise the child in a neutral language (like a universal language of mathematical logic) so that the choice of this important shaper of identity could be freely exercised. (The greatest modernist novelist of the twentieth century, James Joyce, sought vainly to free himself from service to the King's English by writing his last work, *Finnegans Wake*, in his own, created, multilingual vocabulary.)

There is an emerging consensus that children should not be educated in ways which brand sexual stereotypes into their work and play. On the other hand, the idea that the formation of sexual identity itself should

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be neutralized so as to allow the exercise of free choice of gender at maturity would be strongly contested as a proposal for educational reform.

Recent scientific advances in the understanding of genetics have also become grist for the mill of competing ideological perspectives. Conservative theorists may interpret the ways in which genetic factors influence outcomes as a significant substantiation of the Burkean thesis of the lack of realism about human nature in theories of political utopianism and in liberal projections of radical and rapid improvement of societal conditions.

On the other hand, the expansion of the area of the "taken" or chosen by the development of techniques of genetic modification may reinforce an expansive conception of liberty as the freedom to create the self. An extreme version of the third concept of liberty would be the vision of the species of homo sapiens as possessing a plastic self, open to different ways of being shaped by the exercise of free choice, with no given constraints on the grounds and reasons for choice in creating one's own character. The belief that genetic modification would allow a person to reinvent his biological identity goes beyond the scope of scientific practice into the realm of science fiction.

Yet there seems to be no empirical limit to the ways in which persons and groups have invented a past history for their chosen identity. Such invention, which usually involves historical revisionism, has been prominent in the politics of identity since the 1960s, but it has significant antecedents in the past. Fascist Italy, for example, chose to perceive itself as the inheritor of imperial, rather than Christian, Rome just as National Socialist Germany viewed itself as the reincarnation of a Wagnerian version of an ancient Teutonic past. From a traditional point of view, such inventions represent fictions which will not withstand ultimate confrontation with the givens of reality. From a more radical point of view, which seeks authority in the character of the future, a person or group's adoption of an alternative past history represents a decision to creatively transform its identity. The third concept of liberty involves the legitimation and justification of the effort at creation or transformation of individual or group identity.

The exploration of the third concept of liberty, particularly in its existentialist version of the 1940s, receded under the impact of the political developments of the postwar period. By the 1950s, the scope and depth of the confrontation between political systems championing forms of totalitarian socialism against variations of capitalist democracies formed the background for Isaiah Berlin's delineation of the two concepts of

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positive and negative liberty. The third concept of liberty has reemerged in the politics of identity since the 1960s.

THE REDISCOVERY OF THE THIRD CONCEPT of liberty took place with the change in political climate that characterized the dramatic and self-declared revolutionary activities of the 1960s. The sanctioning of an intellectual revolt against all forms of established authority makes possible the rejection of the two more traditional concepts of liberty with their reliance on the givens of self and of history. In a philosophical and literary context, the view that history is a "given" has been confronted by the postmodernist thesis of Jacques Derrida that any historical narrative can be "deconstructed" so that the record of the "given" is open to contrary interpretation. Similarly, in the postmodernist investigations of Michel Foucault, any norm which is sanctioned by authority can be considered arbitrary because of its connection to a historical culture of domination.

The political context for such a concept of freedom is no longer that of the division between two power blocs that could be identified with championing either negative liberty or positive liberty. Rather, it points to the rejection of both camps in their ideological confrontation. With the actual end of this confrontation, the fixed lines of cohesion lessened, giving more scope to the possibilities of the new politics of identity.

An interpretation of liberty derived from the legitimacy of human choice moved to the foreground. The legitimation of these new patterns of identification has been the focus of political change in diverse areas, including (1) new directions in sexual or gender politics, (2) new patterns in nationalist movements, and (3) the advocacy of multicultural educational curricula against the tradition of teaching the historical cultural heritage.

(1) New Directions in Sexual or Gender Politics

The traditional political agenda of the movement for women's emancipation had stressed the continuity between the rights which the State should grant to women and the natural rights ascribed to all human beings in a free society. The right to women's suffrage or the right of women to inherit and control property, for example, was viewed as a rectification of the exclusion of women as bearers of rights accorded to all other human beings or to fellow citizens. Within this agenda of formal equality, there was also a demand for the recognition of the special needs or welfare rights of women, as a group, in light of the history of

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their previous deprivation. Yet the societal determination of characteristically male or female relationships and roles and the cultural definition of feminine identity were not, in the main, challenged.

With the third concept of liberty there is a new emphasis on the "option right" to freely select one's sexual identity and orientation. The formal egalitarianism of the liberal state had required that there be no discrimination among persons on irrelevant grounds such as race, religion, or gender. The ideal of sexual liberation, in the idiom of this formal egalitarianism, can be formulated as requiring that sexual orientation should be added to the list of irrelevant grounds for discrimination. The political agenda of a movement for sexual liberation, however, has gone beyond the rhetoric and idiom of the formal egalitarianism of nondiscrimination. As a political corollary of the third concept of liberty, the claim is that a free or pluralist society should move beyond nondiscrimination toward the recognition that freedom for the individual requires that the State and the culture positively support the freedom of choice of persons in their sexual self-identification.

One special area for probing the significance of different concepts of liberty is that of legislative reform on the proscription of various forms of sexual behavior. In the late 1950s, the Wolfenden Commission in England represented the new frontier in sexual politics when it advocated the overturning of previous laws which had proscribed homosexual practice among consenting adults. The argument of the Wolfenden Commission was essentially Millian so that the concept of liberty was interpreted as "negative liberty." From this perspective, proscription of private sexual practice was an unjustified intervention by the State into the domain of the individual. The rights of the formed, adult individual who is capable of acts of free consent should not be invaded by governmental legislation. It was this form of argument which was decisive for the legislative reforms that ensued.

At that time, Justice Patrick Devlin based his criticism of the Wolfenden Commission, to a great degree, on its Millian view of the relationship between the individual and society. According to Devlin, when the State or other societal institutions change the boundaries of their intervention against the liberty of action or freedom of choice of the individual, then the State has also changed the cultural conditions for the development of individuality. Devlin's point was that legislative reform that affects the freedom of the private person in relation to the environing society also affects the norms and conditions for social expression in the public culture. Consequently, in Devlin's view, the Wolfenden Commission was deceiving itself, either unintentionally or

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by design, when it argued that its reforms would involve no change in the patterns of culture or public behavior, but only a change in the legal rights of freely consenting, private individuals to enter into interpersonal relationships.

This connection between negative and positive liberty means, according to Devlin, that proposals for new legislation of private sexual practices can be identified and evaluated as hypotheses for the conditions for the development of culture and morality. Such an evaluation need not represent an opposition to reform legislation, but can be used in support of the cause of reform. The proponents for the legalization of homosexuality could have pointed to potential improvements in the patterns of the social culture, such as increased pluralism in cultural expression, which would be the consequence of the replacement of proscription and repression by the recognition of the range of human sexuality. In any event, there is a consensus that significant and far-reaching changes have taken place in the public culture which can be attributed, in some measure, to legislative changes on the rights of the individual to freely consent to private acts of sexual practice.

In contrast to the views of both Wolfenden and Devlin or, as it were, to partisans of either negative or positive liberty, the framing of the question has shifted. Freedom of the individual is not formulated in the traditional idiom of the right of the formed, adult self who can consent to or resist the intervention of the sovereign state into a private domain. Nor is the realization of freedom identified with the power of the group to determine or legislate the forms and limits of social expression within the culture. Rather, the concept of liberty involves the freedom of the protean individual to create his own forum of selfhood or sexuality and his own lifestyle independent of the rooted claims of a prior or predetermined selfhood or the historical constraints of cultural norms. This individual is a cultural anarchist, relative to the presupposed *structures* that condition the forms of individuality in the conceptual framework of positive liberty; he is a formless pluralist, relative to the given inherited boundaries of the integral self that are assumed in the negative concept of liberty. The value ascribed to the creation of plural selves goes beyond resistance to governmental coercion or opposition to discrimination in the areas of private choice.

The third concept of liberty has had a particular impact on the political agenda because of its stress on pluralism and the inherent value of diversity. The changing political agenda requires that historical cultural institutions, such as traditional churches or conventional networks of voluntary association, should be reformed to enhance the possibility of

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plural lifestyles. Thus the issue in dispute in gender politics is no longer the right of consenting adults to enter into private sexual relationships, but the need to reform major institutions of the culture to enhance freedom of choice. Thus, one example is the claim that limiting the institution or sacrament of marriage to heterosexual individuals is a historical norm of the culture which involves an essential discrimination against freedom as the choice of plural lifestyles. Consequently, the legitimation of gay or lesbian marriage rites is asserted as an extension of nondiscrimination and as a requirement of liberty.

In the traditional view, based upon alleged biological facts of a given human nature, the procreation and associated rearing of children were related to heterosexuality. In terms of the third concept of liberty, with human nature represented as a product of choice rather than a biological given, this would be a discrimination against, or denial of, the free choice of gay or lesbian individuals. The legal reforms suggested are the legitimation of adoption or other strategies for parenting by nonheterosexual families. In one branch of feminist theory, the lifestyle of marriage asserts a choice which excludes any need for male participation. Thus, two women with access to a sperm bank or sperm donor could freely choose or create the process of partnership, deciding which partner should be obligated to give the fertilized ovum and which partner should be obligated to carry the fetus to term.

The interpretation of liberty as the freedom to create the self brings with it a change in the application of the concept of equality. In both liberal and conservative traditions of Western society, equality has been identified with a demand that there can be no discrimination based on irrelevant reasons, such as, as the formula goes, race, religion, or gender. Under this interpretation, egalitarianism would not be denied by a political order which discriminated for reasons such as talent, ability, performance, or even prior deprivation.

In Western societies, reasons that may be rooted in the recognized "givens" of biology or history have been judged to be relevant. Consequently, there has been a pattern of discrimination against the participation of women in combat infantry units or in the selection of families that lack a male father and a female mother to adopt infants. The third concept of liberty renders any proposed reasons rooted in biology or history irrelevant relative to the right of the person to exercise free choice in the creation of his identity. An extension of social egalitarianism follows from denying the relevance of biology or culture as grounds for discrimination. The consequent limit upon what may be considered relevant reasons for discrimination sets a political agenda which seeks

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to confront and revise the justification of traditional patterns, ranging from marriage and child-rearing to leadership in scouting, participation in athletics, or the obligations of military service. Thus, the replacement of a negative or positive concept of liberty by the third concept supports an alternative interpretation of equality.

(2) New Patterns in Nationalist Movements

With each of the three concepts of liberty, there is a parallel justification of modern and contemporary nationalist movements. Excepting the conceptual perspective of negative liberty, the individual sovereign state assumes the role of the individual person whose integrity is to be protected from external coercion. In the theories of political sovereignty that emerged with the beginnings of the modern nation-state, a sovereign state was identified as an integral and inviolable member of an international system of recognized states. Each state had a fundamental right of self-defense against an aggressor. The fundamental duty of the sovereign state was defined in terms of the exercise of this right of self-defense and the protection of the national interest. This exercise was considered to be sufficient reason for the abrogation of the liberties of many citizens and individuals. Accordingly, the primacy of political freedom was identified with the preservation of the independence of the sovereign state from external acts of incursion or aggression. Within the international system, the idea of negative liberty is expressed in the formulation of non-aggression pacts among all established states whose sovereignty is absolute.

The shift from a negative to a positive concept of liberty can be traced in the changing political visions of the nature of the sovereign state. The seventeenth-century Enlightenment ideal was the achievement of a balance-of-power system among integral sovereign states. This rationalist idea was replaced by the nineteenth-century Romantic vision of the nation-state as the embodiment of the aspiration for self-determination of a historic People. The focus shifts from the protection of the existing sovereign states to the development of new states from their embryonic nationhood as derived from a common language or shared collective experience and memory. The processes which give birth to the new nation-state may involve acts of secession from the established political order, particularly against the traditional European multiethnic or multinational empires. The ideal of positive liberty is invoked in the justification of wars of national liberation and may be used to legitimate territorial transgression against established sovereignties. The justifica-

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tion of the newly created sovereign state is that it advances the positive liberty or self-realization of the group by expressing in political forms the latent identity of the historical people.

With the third concept of liberty, the possibilities of "constructed" nationalism have emerged. For this liberty involves the right to define oneself, leaving the group free to choose its own form of self-identification. On the basis of this self-identification, it can assert its claims for national self-determination with the accompanying claim for international recognition of its existence and rights. Accordingly, in national contexts, the conceptual interpretation of freedom as the right to create, invent, or choose one's identity can serve to legitimate the aspiration to territorial sovereignty of the self-defined group.

In practice, the construction of a group identity often involves elements of continuity with historical origins. The demand for recognition of the rights of the newly self-defined group is usually connected to aspects of its historical experience and particularly with its assertion of its collective status as a victim of history. The understanding of the ideological shift to the third concept of liberty is relevant to the recent surge in new nationalist, as well as new secessionist, movements. While many of these are faithful to the pattern of nineteenth-century nationalism which embodied the positive concept of liberty, whether in Croatia or Slovakia, Kurdistan or Chechnya, other cases reflect the significance of constructed nationalism involving the third concept of liberty.

Among the diverse contemporary nationalist movements, two of the most prominent cases that exhibit the use of the third concept of liberty are the movements for Quebecois secession and for Palestinian statehood. Although these reflect very different historical experiences, a crucial element in each is the legitimation of the right to define forms of group identity.

The French population in Canada had, for centuries, asserted its role as an integral member of the Canadian nation. From its formation, the Canadian confederation was to be a bilingual state whose founding laws recognized the right to a separate cultural and religious development of the French-Canadian population. Within the Quebecois secessionist movement, there has been a denial or revision of that historical self-identification and the assertion of a right to develop a new group identity. The secessionist movement asserts a new identity for the Quebecois which rejects their continuation as a participant in the Canadian confederation and requires the creation of a new national sovereignty. There is, in part, a confirmation of the implicit recognition of a third concept of liberty in the nearly universal acceptance of the right of

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Quebec to secede from Canada subject to a popular referendum. There has been virtually no Lincolnesque anti-secessionist assertion of the indivisibility of the historic Canadian State and no manifestation of rhetoric about Canadian national destiny. The absence of principled objections to the right of a new national self-definition has not led to a secession since the practical realities of economic viability and political restructuring have raised barriers against such an accomplishment.

Historically, the Arab communities that inhabited the southern half of the Ottoman *villayette* of Bayreuth, which later became the Western half of the British mandate of Palestine, had rejected any attempt to separate them from Arab and Muslim communities in adjacent territories. Politically, their solidarity with the Arab and Muslim world with which they shared bonds of language, culture, and religion with the accompanying rejection of any self-identification as Palestinians led to their refusal to recognize a special status for the evolution of the British mandate of Palestine. Since the 1960s, however, this community has formulated a self-identity as the Palestinian people. The significance of this self-definition is recognized both by those who champion the new nationalist claims that are implied by such self-identification as well as by those who resist them. The widespread acceptance of their claims represents in part an implicit recognition of the right of any community, as in the third concept of liberty, to choose its own form of self-identification. The legitimation of that self-definition provides the basis for the expression of national self-determination in a new sovereign state. The absence of principled objections to the right of a new national self-definition does not resolve the practical dangers and problems which inhibit the successful emergence of new political arrangements in the Middle East.

The complex case histories of Quebecois secessionism or Palestinian nationalism are only two of a large number of nationalist movements that seem to have proliferated in the recent past. There are, of course, many diverse causes other than a change in the conceptual interpretation of freedom for the proliferation of these nationalist movements. No single cause could explain the persistent regeneration of historic nationalist movements such as the Basques and Corsicans in Europe, the Polisario and Ibo in Africa, the Timorese, the Tamil, the Sikhs, and the Uigur in Asia. The new international disorder that followed upon the breakdown of the binary blocks of the postwar world may represent a more significant causal factor. Yet the recognition that freedom involves a right to the adoption of national self-identification is a relevant factor in the growth of new, nationalist movements.

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The philosophical anthropologist Ernest Gellner had speculated on the possibility that the number of members of the United Nations would eventually rise from the current 180 toward 8000, the number of identifiable language groups of the world. Gellner's assumption is that language provides a basis for asserting a right to national self-definition. With the acceptance of a third concept of liberty, national self-determination could be claimed for an even greater number since historical and religious factors, as well as linguistic ones, could provide the basis for a group's choice for self-definition.

Less abstractly, the third concept of liberty provides a basis for opposition to the obligations of identification with historically established states. In accordance with it, such obligations can be construed as acts of coercion by the ruling powers against the right of groups to assert their free choice of self-definition. This has led to the generation of continuing political conflict.

In a small number of cases, such conflict will be resolved by the emergence of new sovereign states. In others, the cultural assimilation of the minority to the majority will provide the resolution of the conflict. For the largest number of cases, the political arrangement will involve the recognition of plural ethnicities and cultures within the historical State. Consequently, the third concept of liberty finds its expression not only in nationalist movements for self-determination, but in the rights of groups to seek linguistic or cultural autonomy. The force of such a reinterpretation of freedom is to justify cultural autonomy for minority groups to the point of suggesting the reformulation of the terms of the social contract within traditional unitary nation-states.

(3) The Third Concept of Liberty and Multiculturalism

Apart from the issues involved in the rise of new or "constructed nationalism" with their accompanying political controversies over the legitimacy of secession and of reconstituted State boundaries, the third concept of liberty has had a significant role in the cultural domain of single nation-states. An interpretation of liberty which stresses the right to create or choose the self without the constraints of a given tradition can justify an extension of cultural pluralism within the framework of a historical nation-state.

The three different patterns that have been noted in the politics of gender and in new forms of nationalism can also be exhibited in the sphere of contemporary cultural politics. According to the first pattern, the sovereign state asserted a claim of neutrality regarding the sphere of

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public culture. The liberal social contract was formed among *individual* citizens who possessed negative liberty, that is, the right to defend their own private self, property, religion, or culture. The sovereign exercised legitimate authority in the minimal spheres of governmental administration, but could not invade, in accordance with negative liberty, the sphere of the private individual. Consequently, culture or religion were, in theory, banished from the public domain but reserved for private expression. Every private individual and the voluntary associations constituted from such individuals were free to pursue their preferences in religion or their choices in education and culture.

Such a founding political theory which required the absence of any state-recognized religion or state-supported culture with the concomitant, naked public square was championed in theory but never realized in practice in many Western liberal states, including the United States of America. Despite the theory which assigned culture to the private domain, the language and religion of the historical majority occupied a dominant place in the public culture, which accommodated varying degrees of public expression of minority, religious, and social groups. Whatever the abstract theory of the social contract, the initiation of the individual into the obligations of citizenship involved a high degree of assimilation or integration into the common culture.

According to the second pattern, with the concept of positive liberty, the focus shifts away from preserving the wall of separation between the public and private domain toward a concern with the free development of the group which is identified as the bearer of historical self-consciousness. Characteristically, in liberal theories of democracy, this group is identified as the nation or the "People." The social contract was rewritten in cultural terms as a reciprocal agreement embodying positive liberty for all groups in the society. On the one hand, there was a cultural requirement that minorities be co-opted into the common civic, popular, or national culture; on the other hand, minorities were to willingly seek assimilation and participation in the inherited traditions of the cultural majority.

In terms of positive liberty, it is consistent with the free development of the society that minority groups be educated in the historically dominant or traditionally accepted language and culture. The caveat is the recognition that the concept of positive liberty has often involved the possibility, in Rousseau's phrase, of "forcing" persons "to be free." Thus, in the name of national self-realization, Aborigine children were coercively separated from their natural families in order to undergo education and self-identification as citizens of Australia. More characteris-

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tically, as a matter of historical practice, there has been a high degree of symbiosis between the ways in which the majority culture integrates the minority and the willingness of the minority to assimilate.

With the development of the third concept of liberty, a third pattern emerges under which individual and minority groups are free to choose their own public identities. Accordingly, they are not required to maintain their cultural identity as a private domain which does not infringe on the public sphere. Nor is the minority required to enter into a kind of implicit contract with the traditions, values, sancta, or classics of the historical majority culture. The ideal of the national culture, in accordance with the third concept of liberty, is the recognition and advancement of plural languages and cultures in the public sphere.

Accordingly, the issue of cultural politics in democratic societies has become contested in terms of two options for the evolution of a historic people or nation. One view argues for the legitimacy and need for cultural assimilation as part of political integration and social cohesion. The competing view argues for the pursuit of diversity and the value of the preservation of plural, minority cultural expressions.

Advocates of multiculturalism who have argued for the equal rights of any chosen culture have also claimed special rights for the status of the cultural expression of identified "victim groups" in contemporary society, including the culture of women as a gender and selected minorities. From the muticulturalist perspective, the champions of the historical cultural tradition, like T. S. Eliot or Ralph Ellison, are viewed as the defenders of elitism and cultural domination in the guise of the supposedly universal standards of "high" culture. The multiculturalist contends that the assertion of universal standards is a mask for cultural coercion against the right to the freedom of self-identification and provides a spurious basis for the legitimation of discrimination against minority cultures. In terms of education, the imposition of a national or classical cultural curriculum is judged to be the expression of such coercion and discrimination.

The issue has been joined in contemporary debate, with particular focus on cultural studies in the university. Those who assert historical or classical standards consider the multicultural program to be a form of nihilism and relativism which denies objective cultural values as well as an abdication of educational standards. The counterclaim, sanctioned by the third concept of liberty, is that only an educational system which allows groups to select their own cultural icons and determine their own internal and authentic standards can be adopted in a free society.

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Among Western societies, the American cultural paradigm had been formulated in terms of both negative and positive liberty. Constitutionally, the plurality of religious, linguistic, and cultural groups were legitimized as the rights of the private individual to exercise freedom. On the other hand, American national self-realization was to be achieved through a gradual, uncoerced process of cultural assimilation of minorities into the culture of the majority. To a remarkable degree, both of these approaches succeeded, particularly as the historically dominant culture of colonial Protestant America integrated successive waves of European ethnic communities.

In recent times, the third concept of liberty has been used by the more numerous and diverse immigrant groups as well as by the historically segregated black community. It has contributed to the challenge confronting such groups in the patterns of cultural integration into American society.

One simple historical illustration of the operation of the third concept of liberty that involves the right of self-definition is available in the changing practice of the United States Census. Previously, the Census required the "objective" classification of the race of the enumerated resident to be carried out by a presumably impartial and informed Census official. Since 1960, however, the individual resident is free to exercise his own racial self-identification in the Census. As of 2000, this exercise of choice can be pluralistic and permits the listing of more than one self-definition by race.

In the more complex ethnic and cultural contexts, this interpretation of liberty legitimates the right of a group to seek to transform its identity. Most dramatically, in the United States, there has been an exercise of choice by a significant part of the community once identified as "Negro" to choose to be Black or African-American and, with greater historical discontinuity and political significance, to cease to consider its religious heritage as Christian. There has been a movement to adopt and adapt variants of historical African and Islamic religions and to reconstruct and pursue the linguistic and cultural traditions which are assumed to follow from such self-identification. It is not yet clear whether this example is sui generis or represents a harbinger, model, or trend for the transformation of other ethnic and religious groups.

The educational implications of the third concept of liberty reach beyond the issue of cultural pluralism and cultural integration. In terms of a general approach to education, both the "traditional" school, which aimed at transferring the heritage of a historical culture to the next generation, and the "progressive" school, which aimed at fostering

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an environment in which the self develops its own given potentialities, represent constraints on freedom of choice. The third concept of liberty promotes a more variable sense of the options for individual lifestyles. The possibility of "dropping out" rather than striving to realize potential and the option of moving beyond reasoned criticism of the inherited social institutions in favor of an adversarial stance toward one's own culture are legitimated. The legitimation of alternative lifestyles seems to have been taking place at a greater pace in Western society and education since the 1960s.

The case for diversity, whether of cultural identification or of lifestyle, is supported as a requirement of human freedom. Consequently, the constraints which are derived from a historical tradition, social unity, and cultural standards are judged to be secondary to the *priority of freedom*.

According to this analysis, the third concept of liberty serves as a kind of trumping suit against the alternative views in current disputes on issues of gender, nationalism, and culture. In light of the significant role played by the third concept of liberty in contemporary political and cultural life, the adequacy of this concept merits critical examination. The perennial challenges to any concept of liberty which are implicit in the constraints of nature, the irreversibility of history, and the inevitable need for balance in choosing among competing values merit restatement and review.

In many societies, the idea of freedom, often in association with a "dream of Reason," has been an instrument that projects a vision of human liberation from the bonds of nature or the constraints of history. In general terms, the vision of human liberation has included the claim that there can be an infinite extension of the natural resources available to human society and that there can be unlimited progression toward human perfectibility. Without evaluating such a general thesis of the scope of human freedom, the more particular thesis of the third concept of liberty has stressed the possibility of the transformation of human identity, both of the individual and of the group, despite the seeming limits of nature or the apparent givens of history. Yet any vision of liberation must confront the recognition of the "eternal verities" and platitudes about the ineradicable facts of nature and the burdens of history. The recognition of the truths that are embedded in platitudinous expressions about the ways in which nature and history circumscribe human transformation challenges the application of the third concept of liberty in any society.

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The analysis of the third concept of liberty in relationship to the nature of human nature is continuous with the contemporary critique of the excesses of the utopian imagination in modern history. Again, without entering into the general question of the limits of human progress, we can ask whether specific programs of human transformation involve changes that would go beyond the limits of nature.

A significant illustration is the way in which one of the most prominent issues in the politics of identity—gender equality in military service—provides a reformulation of one of the earliest exercises of the utopian imagination. In Plato's apparently utopian projection of an ideal political society in the *Republic*, he envisages women as front-line troops in defense of the city-state. Plato advances this conception in the context of the possibilities of education in transforming the human nature of the soldiers or guardians of the city. He assumes that gender differences are superficial, so that if women were to cut their hair short and men were to wear their hair long, they would become indistinguishable in the cadres of combat infantry. Plato's hyperbolic language indicates his ironically skeptical attitude toward this transformation, yet his argument has provided a test case throughout historical speculation on natural constraints in planning ideal societies.

The current affirmative acceptance of Plato's ironical perspective of the place of women in combat infantry may rest upon the belief that contemporary technology has changed the conditions of battlefield warfare from those of Plato's era. The recognition that the change in the combat status of women reflects a change in the conditions of warfare may actually serve to reinforce the relevance of gender for military service. In those contemporaneous battlefield conditions which do not exhibit a technological revolution but which are continuous with those of previous eras, as in Chechnya, Sierra Leone, or Kosovo, the constraints of gender have not been rendered irrelevant.

Whether in the ancient and commonplace example derived from Plato's utopian fable or in the sophisticated projections of genetic modifications of human beings, there remains the enduring possibility of natural limits. The fact that some or many of the ascriptions of gender differences as having a basis in nature represented a societal imposition of discriminatory prejudice does not render *all* such ascriptions illusory. Free choice must recognize the existence of the constraints of nature, even if the boundaries of such constraints are not fixed for eternity. The constraints embodying an understanding of the nature of things and the permanent characteristics of human nature remain a challenge to the third concept of liberty.

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THE THIRD CONCEPT OF LIBERTY has served to revitalize and reinforce the aspirations of particular historical communities. The success of such transformation involves the recognition of the possibilities that are latent in the third concept of liberty. Yet the very success indicates a potential flaw in the application of this concept in contemporary politics of identity. For any such transformation has been achieved through great efforts over a significant historical span and cannot be easily reversed or readily changed by another application of the concept of the transformative freedom of the group to create its own identity.

The black community in the United States, for example, has succeeded in changing the stereotypical caricatures of the group's identity, which had received a high degree of popularization and even a marginal degree of internal acceptance. These caricatures of black identity were replaced as part of a process of the transformation of the civic condition of the black community as well as of its self-identification. The further direction of this effort to transform black self-identification, whether along the lines of African nationhood or of Islamic religion, or along the lines of an ethnic group which parallels the career of other American ethnic groups in becoming co-opted into the civic culture of American society, remains an undetermined aspect of the current politics of identity. Any such transformation is not readily reversible, but becomes fixed by historical achievement. Accordingly, even with the successful realization of a historical transformation of group identity, the constraints that history imposes upon the freedom of self-transformation remain a challenge to any application of the third concept of liberty.

A similar illustration is the way in which the Zionist movement succeeded in transforming, at least in part, the religious status of the Jewish community into the condition of modern nationhood. Such a change of seemingly rooted characteristics of group identity can be represented as a demonstration of the way in which an option to create an alternative form of self-identification can be realized despite historical adversity. Yet the significant conceptual point is that after such a transformation has been achieved, the constraints of history have not been overcome. For the new condition must accept or come to terms with a new sense of the continuing burdens of history. In the case of the Zionists, the transformation to nationhood has placed upon successive generations the subsequent burdens of defense of a sovereign state, the establishment of a solvent economy, and the challenge of realizing treaties of peace with neighboring states. The third concept of liberty is challenged since after any transformation of the identity of the group, there is no release from the burdens imposed by history.

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The admonition that one must beware of what one wishes for because the wish may be granted provides a cautionary tale for any application of the third concept of liberty to concrete historical circumstances. The interpretation of liberty as the freedom to create the identity of the self suggests an illusion that such a creation is a liberation from history. While it may mark a liberation from a particular set of historical circumstances, it can never provide a liberation from the limits which the new configuration of historical circumstances sets upon the possibilities of individual or group transformation.

ANY CONCEPT OF LIBERTY functions in a context of plural values. The choice for the priority of liberty involves a balance with other values. Indeed, one justification of the priority of liberty is that only in a free society can there be an open and critical examination of competing values so that an optimal balance can be reached. The justification of freedom presupposes some value that can be assigned to the ends for which freedom is a means.

In the effort to realize a balance among plural values, there is always the possibility that liberty, like competing values such as civic order or economic equality, will be subject to compromise for the achievement of an optimal societal outcome. The person who would strive for freedom in the sense of personal independence has weighed this achievement against the values of the condition of dependence, often security of status and paternalistic guidance. Similarly, the community that insists on freedom of speech recognizes that there are some values connected with the boundaries of free speech, whether these are drawn in terms of the protection of privacy, the defense of standards of morality, or even the recognition of the necessities of national security. A society which adopted a conception of liberty under which liberty could never be constrained would probably so undermine its own social cohesion that it would not be able to realize the practice of liberty. The exercise of liberty always involves some calculation of the benefits to be realized weighed against the costs.

The creation of any new group identity in the context of identity politics involves some weighing or balancing of the advantages and disadvantages of any particular choice. Accordingly, those who champion liberty as the exercise of free choice in the creation of a group's identity must evaluate the consequences and prices of every particular choice as set against alternative paths for the realization of the ends and interests of the members of the group. The application of the third concept of liberty in practice necessarily requires the recognition that all human ideals are limited because human society can never be a monolithic expression of a single value, but embodies plural values.

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Like the recognition of the inevitability of the facts of nature and the constraints of history, the realization that a choice among alternative ends is unavoidable in the exercise of human freedom is a truism. Yet truisms or platitudes demand affirmation in those contexts where they are being denied. For in the contemporaneous politics of identity, there have been various ideologies of liberation that assert claims which contradict the platitudes of nature, history, and plural ends. Yet it is relevant to note that truistic statements have taken on the character of platitudes because they embody enduring truths about the human condition.

The third concept of liberty represents a formulation of the perennial ideal of freedom that has special bearing in the peculiar circumstances of our own age. In the new international context, after the rigidities of the long struggle between two antagonistic power blocs, there has been increased room for change in the formerly fixed boundaries of national and ethnic self-identification. In a period of global economic transformation with rapid advances in information technology, there has been greater space for individual self-definition. Yet whether that torch of liberty will function as a guiding light or as a burning sun will depend upon the ways in which its application is carried out with an awareness of the bonds of nature, the burdens of history, and the plurality of values that are implicit in the achievement of a free society.

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JAN-WERNER MÜLLER

German Intellectuals and Democracy: The End of an Era?

THE REGULAR REPORTS about the "crisis" or even the "death" of the intellectuals not only tend to be greatly exaggerated, they also have a way of being refuted almost as soon as they are made—and of haunting the prophets of doom much more than the intellectuals themselves. And yet there is currently a sense in Germany that an era is coming to an end in which intellectuals—or to be more precise, West German intellectuals—played a special role as what they themselves conceived as "suspicious" and "skeptical" democratic citizens. This self-conception contributed much to the prominence—and success—of a particular generation of postwar intellectuals who are now slowly departing from the public stage. But this role also had its internal paradoxes and limits which have become increasingly apparent in recent years.

Nowhere else—with the obvious exception of France and some East-Central European countries—do intellectuals play such a large role. Only in Germany does one find intellectuals such as social philosopher Jürgen Habermas claiming the first two pages of newspapers; only in Germany could a critic, literally tearing apart the latest book by Günter Grass, make the title page of the country's most important magazine, *Der Spiegel*; only in Germany does one find political scientists regularly publishing popular books on the state of the nation, often with pictures of themselves looking diffident and angst-ridden on the front cover; and only in Germany would a random flicking through TV channels inevitably lead the viewer to one of the numerous "talk shows" in which a small round of intellectuals earnestly debate political-*cum*-philosophical topics on an almost daily basis. None of this is to say that intellectuals actually "lead public opinion," as the German concept of *Meinungsführer* would suggest. In fact, as is becoming clearer with hindsight, German writers and thinkers were at their best when reacting against firmly entrenched, but morally compromised authority, rather

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than acting as "seismographers" during novel situations—an ideal by which friend and foe have nevertheless tended to measure them.

Who are we talking about then, and what made these intellectuals special? Intellectuals like Jürgen Habermas, Günter Grass, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and Ralf Dahrendorf are all part of a generation born at the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s—old enough to have been part of the Hitler Youth or even the regular Wehrmacht, but too young to have been directly implicated in Nazi crimes. This generation has rightly been labeled "skeptical" on account of its early disillusionment with grand ideological promises—and it was intellectuals of this generation who dominated public debates throughout the history of the old West Germany and even the first decade of the unified country.

These intellectuals first defined their peculiar role at the end of the 1950s and in the early 1960s, and it is no accident that Habermas once called himself a member of the "generation of 1958." It was at this time that the building blocks for the peculiar role of the left-liberal intellectual in West Germany were put into place. Most importantly, in the late 1950s, the attitude toward dealing with the past slowly began to change. The public was stirred by a succession of scandals, in particular a number of anti-Semitic attacks such as the desecration of the Cologne synagogue on Christmas Day 1959, and the now-apparent failings of the judiciary which were revealed in a number of trials. It was in 1959 that Theodor W. Adorno, very much in a capacity which one can only describe as that of a democratic adult educator, delivered an influential radio talk, "What Does Working Through the Past Mean?" In the same year, the philosopher and sociologist Helmuth Plessner republished his book *The Belated Nation*, which he had written in his Dutch exile in the mid-1930s. The former argued for a democratic "vaccination" through enlightenment and knowledge about the past, and pointed to the particular dangers of fascist continuities within democracy, rather than of antidemocratic neo-Nazis. Plessner, in turn, contrasted the healthy democratic developments of the states of Western Europe with the pathological course of German history. Germany had been a "belated nation" since it had "missed" the seventeenth century crucial for the development of a strong bourgeoisie and a modern, liberal democracy. Its desperate efforts to catch up and compensate for deficiencies in state building and national consciousness had contributed to the fact that it had been led down a "special path"—a so-called *Sonderweg*, the end point of which was the Third Reich.

The advocacy both of an active engagement with the past and of the Westernization of Germany became central to the role of the left-wing

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and liberal intellectuals in the Federal Republic. Enzensberger described their task as "the sanitary chore of the intellectuals after the end of fascism, the whole ideological waste disposal, a very wearisome and protracted job." The intellectual was to be watchful of continuities with the pre-1945 past, and reorient Germany towards the political and cultural traditions of the West. This did not exclude the possibility of German intellectuals sometimes criticizing the West themselves *de haute en bas*, which, however, stood in marked contrast to the fact that political leaders—in both East and West—were overeager to please their respective superpowers with their ideological zeal. Moreover, in contrast to the academic doyens and their cultural pessimism which had still dominated the early and mid-1950s, younger scholars tried to consciously define themselves in opposition to the tradition of the "German mandarins" and to the illiberal interwar intellectuals in particular. But the role of the critical intellectual was also defined in contrast to the "party intellectual" co-opted by the state in the GDR, a point Günter Grass insisted on at a number of meetings between East and West German writers. Finally, what one might call a "liberal reconstitution" of the intellectuals was also opposed to the supposed "restoration" under Adenauer—and, in particular, his increasingly autocratic behavior in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when he attempted to become president and establish a government-directed television station. In that sense, the role of the intellectual was based on a triple negative—against the mandarins of the past, the party intellectuals to the East, and the technocratic specialists which the "economic miracle" seemed to require.

Left-liberal intellectuals, often themselves of petty bourgeois origins, were horrified by the crass materialism of the 1950s and revolted by the petty bourgeois nature of West Germany—and their criticism was in fact not entirely free from the cultural pessimism and anti-modernism pervasive among figures on the Right. Habermas, for instance, analyzed the "illusions on the marriage market" in terms of the commodification of emotional life during the "economic miracle," while Enzensberger and Martin Walser wrote satirical novels and hostile poems about the philistinism of the late 1950s.

Opposing Adenauer's anti-communism, the intellectuals often opted for a vaguely defined anti-anti-communism. But while they were sometimes quicker in denouncing the supposed oppression of French intellectuals under de Gaulle than mobilizing support for their imprisoned East German counterparts, they had few illusions about the true nature of the GDR—in fact, some saw the GDR as worse in certain respects than the Third Reich. For them, East Germany was hardly the "better,"

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antifascist Germany—if anything, the existence of the GDR did as much damage to the West German Left as the Third Reich had done to the Right. Rather than the GDR, it was a vaguely defined antifascist, democratic-*cum*-socialist Germany which became the implicit standard of critique. Not least, this stance was an ex post facto resistance to National Socialism—which also explained the curious hostility of some postwar intellectuals to the emigrants. After all, an imaginary democratic socialist German *Résistance* would have worked from within the country, rather than constituting another intellectual and moral possibility outside Germany, as the emigrants supposedly did.

Intellectuals, while often complaining of being "homeless" or even seeing Germany as a "country of enemies," as Enzensberger put it in the early 1960s, in fact were never quite as alienated from the politics of the Federal Republic as the rhetoric suggested. While they attempted to foster what one might call a "culture of suspicion" vis-à-vis the new state and its representatives, by and large they did subscribe to the values of the West German Constitution, and supported its democratic institutions—even if it was sometimes a logic of the lesser evil that led them to this stance. As Enzensberger admitted in retrospect, they were "latter-day liberals, good Social Democrats, moralists and socialists without clearly defined aims, anti-fascists without a programme for the future." However, reformers necessarily could not be as ideologically neat as revolutionaries. And for all their programmatic vagueness, the intellectuals were able to do what was indispensable for intellectuals in order to have any effect at all, namely to define one general interest, in this case "democratization," to which particular criticisms could then be related.

Conceiving of themselves as a "democratic elite" or even a "democratic fire brigade," they sought to substitute for a broader critical public which was yet to develop. They also aimed at fostering what they quite openly called the "re-education of the masses," as well as a sober, so-called "Anglo-Saxon model" of debate, which avoided the supposed German tendency of turning political argument into a matter of mutual moral destruction—a tendency which had proven fatal for the Left during Weimar.

From the very beginning, however, there was also a paradox inherent in the role of the "democratic intellectual," i.e., of the elitist opinion-leader and defender of cultural distinctions in a politically egalitarian society. In theory, this paradox could only be solved over time through the thorough democratization of society—or through ending the role of the intellectual as "national preceptor."

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A culture of suspicion, then, and a catalogue of categorical, negative imperative to avoid the mistakes of Weimar guided the intellectuals' interventions. The advantage of this culture of suspicion was its essentially egalitarian and democratic nature—after all, nobody was to be "above suspicion," and democratic citizens *should* be citizens suspicious of their governments and *should* demand their accountability. The downside was that it could lead—and often did lead—to a primary concern, even an obsession, with unmasking politicians and other intellectuals, and with ascertaining their true personal motivations. Suspicion is, of course, typical of almost any posttotalitarian and postauthoritarian society, as well as exile and expatriate cultures. Suspicion could also prove indispensable for proving one's democratic credentials—to the extent that every generation, it seemed, had to prove its ex post facto resistance against National Socialism through its discovery of continuities with the past. Every generation, it also seemed, had to question the previous generation's attempts at "coming to terms with the past" as somehow deficient. Already in the late 1950s, observers like Manès Sperber were struck with how liberally serious young intellectuals labeled anybody whom they politically disliked as "fascist"—and how much this label seemed to serve their self-image more than any discernible political agenda.

Subsequently, throughout the history of the Federal Republic, instances of major political and intellectual conflict were couched in the language of the past and German continuities. The rebellious student generation of 1968 accused their country of fascism, and were themselves subject to the suspicion of "left-wing fascism" by liberals and conservatives; the terrorists of the 1970s radicalized the reproach of fascism, and were themselves portrayed as "Hitler's children"; and in 1990, the Left saw a reincarnation of the aggressive nation-state of the past, just as much as the Right saw the Left continuing a fateful romantic German "special path" by refusing to be a "normal country." Ironically, rather than unification discrediting the intellectuals of the skeptical generation, as was so often claimed ten years ago, it arguably gave them another lease on public life. True, Günter Grass with his bizarre historical determinism that a German nation-state would automatically lead to "another Auschwitz," Jürgen Habermas with his undifferentiated accusation of "DM-Nationalism" directed against a larger Germany, and the Left's general unwillingness to face up to some of its past misjudgments all did damage to the image of the intellectual as "seismographer" or as being in a position to provide moral guidance during times of enormous historical flux. But, more importantly, with

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the addition of East Germany, the questions of democratization and Westernization which intellectuals like Habermas and Grass had made their special task to answer, were back on the agenda—and with them, the old role of the intellectual as democratic citizen, even if most of the intellectuals were now reaching the age of senior democratic citizens. It is entirely conceivable that without unification the intellectuals of the skeptical generation would have retired quietly. Instead, with the sudden prospect of unification in 1990, many intellectuals reentered the public sphere, where they often reenacted roles—and rearticulated positions—which they had already formulated as early as the 1960s. They feared that with the addition of seventeen million undemocratic East Germans calling for *ein Volk*, and the "return of the nation-state," Germany might yet again suffer from a "democratic deficit" and see renewed nationalism. Given that Adenauer's grandson so clearly appealed to what one might call a "pan-German economic miracle identity" and centered the unification process on the executive, thereby reinforcing the perception of a new "Chancellor democracy," intellectuals saw ominous parallels with the 1950s and feared the establishment of continuities with pre-1945 Germany. While none of their proposals in 1990 were taken up, and while they were often subjected to harsh attacks by the Right, ultimately they did end up playing the role of "national preceptors" for another decade—and, among other things, battled against the rise of a nationalist "New German Right" which seemed increasingly likely in the mid-1990s.

Ten years after unification, however, there is a widespread sense that, while it was a crucial and valuable part of the task of the left-liberal intellectuals after 1945 to detect and denounce continuities, the old model of intellectual intervention has itself become anachronistic—ironically, due to its very success in helping to make Germany a democratic Western country. Even left-wing and liberal intellectuals feel that the past can serve less as a direct yardstick for the present than it did for the "generation of 1958"—which is not to say that younger intellectuals want to draw the infamous "thick line" under the past. Whether the Germans were able to deal openly with their past had once been the clear standard applied by left-liberal intellectuals (but also by the American occupiers) as to whether Germany had yet become another, democratic country. Now remembrance has become a much more differentiated and decentralized process, especially among the young. Also, in retrospect it seems that invoking the past frequently furnished later generations with a moral certainty which otherwise could hardly be had in pluralist societies faced with complex and morally ambiguous

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situations. Substituting analogy for argument as a justification of foreign policies—as, most recently in the Kosovo War, when a left-wing government evoked the maxim "Never again Auschwitz," replacing the previous slogan "Never again War"—was also designed to lend these policies a self-evident moral legitimacy which they might or might not have had, had there been a proper debate about their meaning for the present. Apart from its obvious polemical value as the ultimate rhetorical weapon, drawing parallels with the past would frequently—though not always—serve to set the speakers up as ex post facto resisters, just as a strong self-incrimination might in fact often have been exculpatory. "*Qui s'accuse, s'excuse*," as Enzensberger put it in 1964.

In the same vein, many intellectuals also feel that the old gestures of suspicion—so effective both in consolidating the old Federal Republic and in casting out one's political opponents—will no longer do. If the twin tasks of intellectuals in democratic societies are "subversion" of reigning opinions and furthering "civility" in public debate, as sociologist Jeffery Goldfarb has put it, then the culture of suspicion promoted the former, but often detracted from the latter. It encouraged a kind of collective exorcism and ostracism, as well as a tendency for witch-hunts on "internal enemies," which was an expression of the Cold War as much as of the uncertainty of the Germans about their own democracy—although suspecting even anti-Nazis did make sense at a time when some of them turned out actually to have been Nazis.

Paradoxically, the culture of suspicion, of criticism and questioning, created trust for the country, both domestically and abroad—a fact that became obvious not least last year when Günter Grass, Germany's premier suspicious citizen, appeared in his first-ever tails at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm. But at the same time, the culture of suspicion made it difficult for many intellectuals to genuinely accept conflict within liberal-democratic rules. For this idea, Germans have the unique concept of *Streitkultur*—a culture of civilized dispute—but the very fact that it is necessary to invoke such a highly normative concept seems evidence for the absence of the thing itself. Such an acceptance of conflict might also further a "sense of reality" which outside observers from Hannah Arendt onwards found missing in Germany and which might help to redeem the still-unfulfilled promise of a more "Anglo-Saxon" style of debate.

While many older intellectuals of course continue to make prominent public interventions, there is ample evidence that younger writers remain suspicious of a *littérature engagée* and the role of the intellectual in politics. For instance, when young writer Ingo Schulze, often

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described as a kind of Raymond Carver of East Germany, pleaded for peace in Kosovo in 1999, his intervention seemed as noble as it seemed anachronistic. Arguably, this is not just a matter of wider "postmodern" predilections, as some observers have claimed. A fundamental dilemma is the lack of any easily identifiable "general interest" which intellectuals could responsibly advocate. The democratization of West Germany after 1945 was such a clear interest, and the intellectuals, by performing the role of "democratic citizens," could directly contribute to it. There is an important theoretical and practical link between democracy and what intellectuals tend to do best—deliberate. In that sense, the effectiveness of the skeptical generation has been not least due to the fact that they promoted a goal to which intellectuals—*as intellectuals*—could make a genuine contribution.

The reverse side of the paradox of the democratic intellectual who speaks for, rather than to the people, is that, like democrats more generally, the democratic intellectual does not need any particular expertise. There are no "experts" in democracy, and the intellectuals' lack of expertise only proved the point that citizens needed the right attitudes, rather than particular knowledge. Arguably, all of this is much less true with current issues such as ecology, moral disagreements about bioethics and technology, or instances of international conflict that are less moralized and ideologized than the Cold War. In these fields, which are of course also hotly debated in Germany, the experts and potentially even the old-style cultural pessimists are back with a vengeance, while the past and ideas about "Westernization" hardly illuminate the moral and political stakes. Younger German intellectuals will have to think again.

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ARTHUR BERGER

Copland and the Audience of the Thirties

IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE that Aaron Copland was once considered a formidably advanced, percussive, austere, and inaccessible composer. The distance between what was considered his very austere manner of the early thirties and the accessible manner he would shortly afterward assume was a long one indeed, and it is remarkable that he negotiated it so quickly. Even within the more enlightened artistic ambience of Germany, when the masterly pianist Walter Gieseking looked at the Piano Variations with the idea of programming it on his recitals, he decided that his audiences would not tolerate a work of such "crude dissonances."

Two more works in the category of Copland's "tougher" music were to follow in the next few years, *Statements* and *Short Symphony*, the latter and earlier of the two (1933), a work so far beyond the capacities of the orchestras of the time that both Serge Koussevitzky and Leopold Stokowski were obliged to shelve it when they came face to face with its technical difficulties, especially its jagged lines and rhythmical demands. (Copland arranged it for sextet because of the problems he had over it with orchestras, and the result has been a truly powerful chamber work.) Koussevitzky could not even start to consider it, owing to his limited technique, though he was otherwise dedicated to bringing all of Copland's orchestral music to light. Stokowski made some attempt to study it, but was discouraged by its demands, returning to it, however, a decade later to give its USA premiere with his NBC Symphony. (The players, he reported, still found it very difficult.) The first performance anywhere actually took place in Mexico in 1934 under the direction of Copland's friend, the composer Carlos Chávez, with his Orquesta Sinfónica, over which he had sufficient authority to exact the unusual number of ten rehearsals in contrast to the three or so that orchestras normally have.

Like many of us in the arts in the thirties, Copland felt pressured by leftist sympathies to communicate to the masses, and one of his first responses was to write a song for the picket line, "Into the Streets May First." It is surprising indeed that a composer who, as everyone knows, very soon afterwards developed an approach that was so wide in its

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appeal and of such fine workmanship at the same time should so miscalculate the musical capacities of a worker on an actual picket line. The precipitous modulations—one of them when we have barely settled into the main key—as well as a vocal range of almost two octaves could give your worker quite a bit of trouble on a picket line, where there would be no accompanying instrument(s) to provide the pitches. It was not Copland's finest hour (but the good intentions were there).

By the middle of the decade the more "popular" Copland that most audiences now know emerged virtually without any transition—the composer of *Lincoln Portrait*, *Billy the Kid*, and the like. Indeed those audiences to this day usually are quite unaware that he has written any other kind of music, and some listeners who know this other music have never quite forgiven him for the periods when he abandoned his less accessible approach for a highly accessible one. They even tend to view his more solid achievements with a certain suspicion, wondering whether the composer of the more popular works could really have been up to meeting the demands.

NOT UNTIL 1941 did Copland return to the compositional approach that most discriminating composers admired in him. We had attended numerous debates at the leftist cultural groups on the subject of what Proletarian music should be, without being in any way convinced that his workaday music was any solution to the problem. The naughty "E-word," we were told at those meetings, was "escapism," which had to be avoided at all costs. Even the businessman poet Wallace Stevens, who you would think would be beyond such things, felt he had to come to grips with the problem when he gave a lecture (something he rarely did) at Harvard, "The Irrational Nature of Poetry," to which my friend and fellow graduate student Delmore Schwartz urged me to accompany him: ". . .the greater the pressure of the contemporaneous," Stevens preached in the staid voice of a minister, "the greater the resistance. Resistance is the opposite of escape."

When Copland returned to his more exacting music, he did not abandon the practice he had cultivated to win the attention and admiration of a wider audience, but pursued the two approaches for a while in tandem. Looking back in the forties he defended his appeal to a wider audience by pointing out that "an entirely new public for music had grown up around the radio and phonograph. It made no sense to ignore them and continue writing as if they did not exist." In the forties one no longer spoke of a political motivation to reach the "masses." It was pretty obvious by then that Marxist sympathies, that were considered

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benign in the Roosevelt era, were now being frowned upon. It is not certain what made him return to his earlier manner; perhaps he never intended to abandon it altogether. But cause and effect are almost never a simple matter of tracing one thing to the other as a unique source.

IN 1941 COPLAND'S REVERSION to his abstract and tougher style of the early thirties took the form of a piano sonata. I was delighted when I saw the score and immediately dispatched an article discussing it to *Partisan Review*:

> About nine years ago, Aaron Copland added to an "austere," somewhat uncompromising style of composition, an alternate style appropriate to "music for use"—music for cinema, radio, schools, and the picket-line. This new preoccupation was not to exclude other "more serious" work, but some of us were apprehensive of the effect on the future of the remarkable idiom expressed by the Piano Variations and the *Short Symphony*, both of which indicated so many possibilities as yet but partially fulfilled. The Piano Sonata (1941), which has finally been presented in New York, is, however, reassurance of the fact that the other Copland not only continues to function, but assumes further significance. If anything is to be deplored, it is that the demands for "occasional" music stand in the way of the completion of more than one work like the Sonata in the course of several years. But this condition may be altered. An obliging forecaster of his musical intentions, Copland now advocates a musical language that would realize the implications of radio and phonograph by addressing a larger audience without "writing down" and after the manner of Shostakovich when his "obvious weaknesses" have been discounted, without sacrificing seriousness. The Sonata may thus be a step towards concentrating in one form what Copland has been accomplishing separately in two fairly discrete series of efforts (to the actual exclusion of one of them). For while the allegedly "very severe" style of the Variations is much in evidence to discourage many listeners on their first acquaintance, there is also an admixture of the wholesome atmosphere of the music for the movie *Our Town* to soften the effect.

The exaggerated determinism of a certain glib school of "sociological" criticism is recalled when Copland insists: "More and more we shall have to find a style which satisfies both us and them"—i.e., the composers who now constitute one another's audience and the radio-phonograph public. Nevertheless, it is interesting in this

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> regard to consider Mozart's confession (in one of his letters) that he put certain effects in his music to please his patrons and he expected approval of these effects to be manifested in a way, moreover, that would currently be considered barbaric anywhere but at the ballet—namely, by applause during the music as each effect is heard, just as we now applaud a pirouette.

Copland was in Hollywood working on the score to the movie *North Star* when the article appeared so I was surprised to receive a prompt response from him in a letter dated April 10, 1943. "Dear Arthur," it began, "The other night while walking down Hollywood Blvd., I happened on a copy of the *Partisan Review*. Imagine my surprise when I came across your piece on the Piano Sonata. I wonder what made you not tell me about it—just neglect? Or was it 'fright' at my reaction?" As the letter continued he confronted me with his main reservations:

> When I call for a "style that satisfies both us and them," I am mostly trying to goad composers on toward what I think is a healthy direction. . . .I think also that for the sake of drawing sharp distinctions you rather overdo the dichotomy between my "severe" and "simple" styles. The inference is that only the severe style is really serious. I don't believe that. What I was trying for in the simpler works was only partly a larger audience; they also gave me a chance to try for a home-spun musical idiom, similar to what I was trying for in a more hectic fashion in the earlier jazz works. In other words, it was not only musical functionalism that was in question, but also musical language.

I have never been able to share the view that there was no sharp dichotomy between the two approaches, and Copland, notwithstanding the warm friendship that developed between us and that diminished only late in his life when he was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, was to persist in the belief that I was one of the commentators responsible for his being cast forever in the role of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I have come to appreciate the fine qualities of his ballet and movie scores and to recognize that these qualities go well beyond what is required to fulfill their function. But works that lean heavily, for example, on compiled folk music—even those of Stravinsky and Bartók—are liable to give up their secret too easily. This music can have its appeal to a discriminating listener, but some of us also want music that is tougher and more challenging. Henry James put it so well in his preface to *The Wings of the Dove*, in a parenthetical comment quite in passing:

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> (The enjoyment of a work of art, the acceptance of an irresistible illusion, constituting, to my sense, our highest experience of "luxury," the luxury is not greatest, by my consequent measure, when the work asks for as little attention as possible. It is greatest, it is delightfully, divinely great, when we feel the surface like the thick ice of the skater's pond, bear without cracking the strongest pressure we throw on it. The sound of the crack one may recognise, but never surely to call it a luxury.)

JUST WHAT THE NATURE of Proletarian music should be—not only the worker songs but also the concert music for the masses—was a contentious matter in the early thirties. One of the leading spokesmen for the proposed genre was ironically one of our most far-out composers, the experimentalist Henry Cowell, who had acquired an international reputation in the twenties (one might almost say "notoriety") for his employment of the fist and forearm on the keyboard (which produced what was called "tone cluster") and, at other times, fingers on the strings. (Later his student John Cage must have gotten the idea of the prepared piano from this.) It was not too surprising that a modernist like Cowell should become involved in the Proletarian cause since his music relied heavily in its choice of content on the vernacular, namely, his Irish heritage of reels and jigs on the one hand, the styles of Eastern music that he explored in his ethnic studies on the other. The dissonance of his tone clusters could upset serious listeners who were traditionalists, but others could find it fun—a kind of circus stunt. His music was not considered forbidding in the way that the music of the "austere" Copland was. Dissonance was by no means the only thing that alienated people from modern music.

In the early debates, often highly agitated ones, that took place at the leftist arts groups—the John Reed Club and the Rebel Arts Group for the arts in general, and, for music, the Pierre Degeyter Club (named after the composer of *Internationale*)—Cowell, obviously drawing on his own experience of putting dissonant tone clusters under folk tunes, advocated dissonant accompaniments for the worker songs. The words, he argued, dealt optimistically with the future when increased freedom and happiness would be the worker's reward, and they should be couched in sounds of the future. (The leftist jury of composers that awarded a prize to Copland's picketline song for May Day 1934 obviously was also thinking in more avant-garde musical terms than the situation warranted.)

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On the linguistic level there was the strong but ill-conceived tendency to equate the word "progressive" in politics and the word "progressive" in art—a misconception, incidentally, that the *Partisan Review* group strongly rejected. This misguided view totally ignored the likelihood that a progressive society might demand a more derivative, backward-looking art that is accessible to the masses. In Germany, for example, some painters operating under the slogan *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) shortly after the October Revolution made claims of having distorted reality to point out social despair and a revolutionary political message. Judith Tick, in her book *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music*, writes of her subject's passionate activism as well as that of her composer husband Charles Seeger's around 1930. It seems that in a setting of some *ricercari* in her usual complex idiom, as Tick relates it, "by creating such profound opposition between voice and piano—at one point Charles Seeger claimed they need only begin and end together—Crawford embodied class conflict into the music itself."

The debates at the politically radical arts groups were not all confined to sophistry such as this. There was, among other things, the legitimate issue of whether it was required to "write down" to what nowadays we call the "dumbed-down" audience, or whether the goal was to elevate that audience intellectually and in its tastes. But things were to change. As the decade advanced it was no longer to be a matter of argument. For worker songs, the model was to be simple traditional folk-like accompaniments, and for orchestral music, though this was not officially spelled out, composers were to keep someone like Tchaikovsky in mind despite his personal bourgeois leanings. Even Dmitri Shostakovich found himself in trouble. After playing for two years to enthusiastic sold-out houses, in January 1936 his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk* was the subject of a scurrilous attack in *Pravda*, the official organ of the Soviet government. Shostakovich was scolded for his "formalism," the severest censure that any composer could get in the USSR and one that could mean almost anything: in this case, probably his dissonance (indeed "cacophony"), "musical chaos," "bourgeois" vulgarity (the salacious plot, including fornication), and so on and so on. It was also the year of the Moscow Trials in which the government claimed there was a conspiracy involving some fifty leading officials and it consequently bore down more than ever on the personal freedom of the citizenry. It took about two years for the ban on Shostakovich's music to be lifted and for him to come back into favor, but he never recovered from the sense of intimidation, of being a hunted man, that came from the direction of authority watching over his shoulder.

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Most composers are more dependent on public opinion and the requirements of mass communication than practitioners of the other arts, and they cannot go underground unless, like John Cage, they are willing to forgo the traditional media (the world-class orchestras and opera companies) through which their art has normally been transmitted. When I was at Harvard in the thirties I recall walking, probably along the Charles, with Delmore Schwartz and passing on to him the news that a mutual friend, the composer David Diamond, was to have a work played by the New York Philharmonic. This was to be quite an event, one that almost never happened in our circle, and in those days it had the added fillip of a glamorous Sunday afternoon coast-to-coast broadcast. Delmore expressed pleasure at the news but he was obviously envious that poets did not have the same opportunity to display the hard-earned results of their creative efforts before a huge public arena. All that poets had were readings in intimate venues and publication in the little magazines. (Having a single poem in a big commercial periodical was the nearest thing to exposure via a coast-to-coast broadcast, but not at all the same.) For my part, I could only feel envious of him and his fellow poets who could pursue their interests without having to answer to the unholy demands of that glamorous world.

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DORIS LESSING

The Wolf People

In the Long Dark

It was dark then,
Weight of dark,
Night all around.

In the cave fire sinks, breathes deep,
Sleepers in furs dream
Light may never return,
The red fire in the sky never rise again,
The dark lie heavy for ever.

One sits at the cave mouth,
Sky full of small lights
Making shadows dark on dark.

No danger.
He knows each stone branch log
By its shadow as his feet know the earth.
Nothing that is not known is near.
Threat begins at the trees' edge.

His eyes move, from close to far,
Then back, and again. . .

Then the sky goes dark,
Clouds spin above,
Heavy dark clings to skin and lashes like fog.

Black. Silent.
Wind brings a rank smell.
His skin is tight with fear.

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In front there, low on earth, close,
A root? A twig? A long stone?
Something he had not seen for all his looking?
The fire spurts up flame.
He sees a glint of little stones.
Yes, pebbles, yes—*yes*—
But no, not stones, but long white claws.
Rain washed claws from the bones on the hill?
No, no, live claws and the line of a paw.

A black rank presence.

He sits like a stone, from fear.
That beast, so close,
What? Bear? Wolf?
The paw reaches to his foot.

Clouds are lightening,
Black thins to dark.
A wolf sits there,
Big black wolf.
Out in the trees the pack watches,
They must be watching, eyes shining,
How their big wolf crouches
At the mouth of the cave,
Near the man,
Near the sleepers in their pelts.

They dream of endless night.

The Misfit

He was born small.
But there was food then,
The cold time short,
Everywhere the young of beasts and People.
A good time, and so he lived.

Small, but he ran like a wolf.
Small, but he threw a stone to kill.
Small, but used an axe and made them.

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Nothing like him had been born before.

They named him Wolf, for his speed.

He squats outside the cave
In the long-light place,
On a rock a bird,
Small bird, singing.
And he, poking out his lips
Makes sounds that only birds make.

They watch from the cave.
They do not like what they see.
They fear what they hear,
Bird sounds from the throat of their Wolf.
They should have snapped his neck at birth.

A bird drops from the rock,
Hops singing at his feet.
Another! He is calling the birds.

One who watches, his elder
Who envies his speed, his skills,
Leaps forward, snatches a bird in either fist,
And the space whirls with feathers, drops of blood.

Wolf rises, turns, faces them—hates.
He jumps up the cliff to a place above the cave.

One shouts, "Never go alone.
Never far from spear or axe."

In reply a sweet long whistle.
From there, over their heads,
He is calling to his birds.

He is alone. They never go alone.
At this time of the long light
Light always is, dark never comes.
They can see how the wolf pack comes,
Loping slow then fast.
They can see but Wolf cannot.

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They do not shout again.

He is singing like a wind or a bird
When the leading wolf leaps.
They hear the crunch of bones.

Birds do not come again
To that rock near the cave.

Their songs and calls go silent when People come.

Young ones, squatting outside the cave
Try bird sounds.

What a gurgling, guggling,
Coughing, hissing, and spitting. . .

Their lips pushed forward,
They try, they try.

As If They Had Always Known It

Once, long ago, *then*. . .
The young ones born were One, Two, Three,
But if death or deaths
One, Two, Three again.
A she could have child One with different faces,
One, One, One again.
And if child Two when the food was good
And the long light long and no dying
Then this Two might have the same face,
But if death or deaths
Two, Two, and Two again.

From the cave they called One! Two!
(Or even Three in a very good time.)
More than one One or Two might come running.

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So once, in a good time, their stomachs full,
The grown ones decided,
The new thought coming into their minds
That instead of One, Two (and even Three)
It would be Bear, Wolf, Eagle,
Black Bear, Brown Hare, White Wolf, Black Eagle.
No end to names, but the end of confusion.

Now a young one grown to hear their name:
"You are Brown Wolf, you are Grey Buck,
You are White Doe, you are Thief Bird."

Who began it—*who*?—
"Never go far from spear or axe,
Never go far alone."

And then, as if they had always known it,
"When beasts run together as one,
When they have gone down the valley,
You must go too."

The beasts have never come together,
Hunter and hunted, never run together down the valley.

Yet someone—*who*?—at some time—*when*?—
said, You must go too.

You. *You* must go too.
You was said by someone,
Someone not us.

Or if it was a dream
Why did that dream stay in our heads?

We dream so many dreams in the time of the long dark.

A Seam of White Crystals

The old one, this one,
Twitching in the cave corner,
His sleep teasing him like fleas,
Dreams and twitches.

Lies still.

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So, is he dead?
The fists on his chest
Rise and fall—and rise.
The others crouch, listening, looking.

Soon one less to feed in this hard time,
Always dark outside,
Always cold outside.

There will be light again.
(There *will* be the long light?)

He is as still as a corpse
Then sits straight up.
Points—but nothing to see,
Only the glimmer and glide of fire light
On a seam of white crystals in the earth roof.

A young one sees, knows,
Climbs inside the old one's arm,
Laughs with him.

The others see nothing,
Know there is more than they have ever seen.
His face, his old face, old teeth bared
And the child's face say Look, *there*.
Look—and that's it. Gone.
He falls back. He is dead.
The young one sobs. It has gone.

They stare at the line of white rubble
Where water drips when the snow thins.
They delay throwing the dead thing out for the wolves
Into snow over earth as hard as stone.

If he saw it—saw *what*?
Laughing and crying,
If the child saw. . .

But he is lying face down sobbing,

"It has gone. It's gone."

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Cave Wolves

A she-wolf, spear-dead.
Her cub crawls and whines,
Sucks the fingers of the killer
Weeping over the dying cub.
His mother, breasts aching from a loss
Puts the beast to her milk,
Suckles it till the teeth are thorns,
Presses milk into a bowl,
And so the cub lives,
Sleeps between the she who feeds him,
And Spear-Wolf, the boy who loves him.

Others plot to kill the wolf,
Enemy, here in their cave,
But one long cold time,
No food, hunger, death,
Their white wolf kills a buck—
White fur on white snow, invisible—
He shares, as he would in the pack.

And the cave eats.
One cave in that bad time.
The young live, none killed.

In caves on hills and heights
News spreads,
A wolf is living in a cave,
A wolf is hunting with the People,
Leaps to kill if the spears fall short,
Turns prey into the spears,
Fights off an attacking wolf.

Soon each cave has its wolf.
When the caves come together
At the mid of the long light
To look each other over, choose mates,
There are more, always more, and hard to count.
Their wolves stand with them, at their knees.

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When the forest wolves howl,
When the wild pack runs near,
In the caves they whisper,
O will they go, our wolves?
O will they leave to join their own?

But the cave wolves remember forests filled with snow,
The cold an ache in their bones,
Ice cutting their pads,
Thirst and licking snow to ease it.

In the caves fires never go out.

But sometimes in the long dark
They sit in the snow outside the caves,
Lift their muzzles to the white ghost in the sky,
See a wolf face there,
Howl to each other from cave to cave,
Singing that they are wolves, wolves.

And the wolves in the forest sing with them.

Something Speaks

That old she has thrown seven to the wolves.
This one, her latest—her last?—is sick.
Little Cub: it was not thought she would grow to Wolf or Bear.
The young one is wrapped in fur, but trembles.
Eyes glitter, heavy, mouth greedy for air,
Smoky this air, the fire low, fuel short.
Outside snow higher than the cave mouth
Pushed back with every fall
Makes walls to the cliff edge.

And still the snow thuds down, the wind moans.
The old she moans too, in words.
"Little Cub, my cub, O my little cub,
Do not die, do not leave us,
O think how you love the forest,
Love to walk in the forest,
Love to bathe in the stream. . ."

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The others, crouching, squatting, lying,
Torpid with the long cold.
Are awake and listen.

The words they use are Come, Go, Run, Danger,
Fetch wood, Skin the Deer. Not much more.

The old she is saying, her voice like the sob of the wind,
"We shall go and pick the yellow fruit,
We shall catch fish. . ."

And then the great thing happens.
"Remember" says, or sobs, or sings the old she,
"Remember how we went into the forest,
Do you remember, Little Cub,
We all went together into the forest,
We picked the yellow fruit,
Remember, do you remember?"

What is this *remember*?
No one before has said, Do you remember?
Yet remember they do, from long light to light,
Long dark to dark, know there have been hungers and plenty,
And now there is this word for what has been.

"Do you remember, child, in the last long light,
You were small then. . . ."
The fevered eyes are open.
Does she remember? Does she smile?

On the mother goes while the wind cries,
And then, worn into sleep, she is silent.

The others speak for her.
"Do you remember, Little Cub, how we all went into the forest. . ."
And so they chanted.
When the old she woke she heard her own words,
New words, that had come from her grief,
Being said again, or sung,
Her pain their pain.

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The child's eyes closed.
"Gone, O gone," cries the mother,
"Gone like the rest,
O gone and I remember. . ."

"She remembers" they say, using the new word.
And they do remember, her seven deaths.

Little Cub is stiff as wood or stone.
The mother lifts her, in her furs,
Takes her to the cave mouth.
Now she must take this one—like the others—
To the cliff edge, to throw to the wolves.

No. She lays the small thing down.
Piles stone on stone as high as the cave roof.
No one moves. No one speaks.

No wolf can reach that dead child now.
But when the warm light comes, they know,
These stones must be pulled down.
And then the wolves will get their meal.

But when the light comes and the heat from the sky
The old mad she is dead and gone to the wolves.

They take down all the stones.
But do not go to the cliff's edge,
The small woeful frozen face hurts them, it hurts.
They find a hollow in the cold stones,
Put in Little Cub,
Build up the cairn again.

Something speaks to them, something. . .
They take shreds of green from between the rocks,
Decorate the cairn.
Do you remember? they say.

Now they tell each other,
Returning from hunt or chase,
We did this, we killed the hare, we snared the bird,
"Do you remember how the hare doubled and darted,
Do you remember the clever hare?"

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Soon there are tellers of tales,
As some are apt for hunting,
Some for making spears.

The Sky-fire

Through black clouds of the long dark
A spear of light.

Look! The sky-fire! The sky-fire's lit again.
Out they run, slipping, sliding, falling
To their meeting place for the long light.

On that hill they stand together, look. . .
On the hill across the valley
Those in the next cave to them stand, look. . .

The clouds go.
In the blue air there on the edge
Slides the round red fire.

They shout, stretch up their arms.
The snow moves, takes the shapes
Of hares, rats, mice, foxes, white on white.
Whiskers, alert, shine pink from the sky.

Wolves bark and jump in the trees.

(Wolves howl for the white face in the sky,
For the coloured winds that shake and shift,
Then they cower and whine and howl.

Now they leap about and bark.)

An eagle floats and screams.
From snow and sky barking, screaming, squeaking, chittering.
It is a full salute and welcome.

The bears in the snow holes wake a little,
Grumble, then back to sleep.
Not yet the time, not time yet.

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And the sky-fire sinks, dark comes back.
The snow fields and hills silent and dark.
A hungry eagle swoops, snatches a too-slow hare.

Yet the dark is less.
At the sky's edge a glow.

The red ball will roll there longer, longer,
And then the long light.

Now they shuffle back to their caves,
Tell the old ones and the young
Safe by the fire,
"It's lit! The sky-fire's lit!
Make up the fire.
Make it."

They know they must feed their fire to keep the sky-fire fed.

The Ice Comes

This is the time of the long light
When rocks are hot from the sky-fire
And the People's bones cold from the long dark
Warm at last.

They are in their watching place at the rim of rocks.
But there is no sky-fire, no heat in the rocks,
A grey cold, grey up there hiding the fire.
No warmth in their bones.

The People move and stamp and stare
As cold beasts do with snow at their backs,
As they do now down in the valley,
Staring and stamping.

But it is the time of the long light,
The time of the sky-fire, hot and close.

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This is the second time of long light and no sky-fire.
The third? They know only they have stood here before
At the rim of rocks cold when they should be hot,
Staring up at the low grey sky,
Staring down at the beasts filling the valley.

There they come, streaming down the hills
Like water pouring and trickling.
More, more, no room down there for more.

You'd not think beasts that hunt
Could mix and mingle with the hunted,
The hunted not run from their hunters.

The People know
"When beasts run together as one,
When they have gone down the valley,
Then you must leave too."

This is what each of them
Is told and must repeat and say again
When they are told their names.
Why? They do not remember.

They are hungry, the People.
The beasts are hungry,
Too nervous to hunt each other,
Crowding and stamping together down there.

There is a slow movement,
They are on the move, all of them.
What a lowing shouting grunting,
What a clashing of tusks,
What a squealing and barking—
Yes, the wolves are running and barking.
What a screaming of birds,
And a thunder, but from hooves and feet.

They are going.
After them whips a wind of stinging ice.

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Yet it is the time of warmth and long light.

"When the beasts have gone then you must go too."

The People leave their place at the rim of rocks
That are furred with white cold.
They reach the valley floor that is empty but fouled
And smelling of the beasts that were there.
They follow the beasts down the valley,
Listening for their thunder,
Listening for the scream of wind in the eagles' wings.

They have left their caves and their hunting places.
They are leaving everything they know.

Their dogs go with them.

VALERIE WOHLFELD

Cameo

Caught in his arms—great ruffled
fish rococo-scaled in petals' calico
folds, scrolls of lace and matching hair bow—
pressed to his buttonhole:
carnation's fringed and mottled
lips pursed to my closed lips—I stood soul
to spectral soul drowning with the drowned.

Gelid wax-lit eye: the fish outward-bound.
Wave-seized cameo,
onyx sea: frothy silhouette, sunk-stone below.
Flawless pleats, canopy-unwound
dorsal and ventral banners, flounce-spined camisole,
silk-veiled fin-rayed poison:
scorpion-fish dressed coral-masked deception.

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Slow-held in the grotto
we danced in brindled calico conflagration.
Fishermen returned hinge-eyed too-small fish to requisite
water. I danced with Mother and the undertow
on sand, and with Father in sonic-sounded deep no echo
could outwit. I opened my patent-leather
purse: the unclasped ocean poured out of it.

Furnaced in topaz fires, misfits, angels fever-
fed: I could not burn in massacres of fire,
golden statuary, the dead undead beside Abednego
unlit in flame in Babylon. I could not drown in water's
apposite quarters: unbound
restive dead in each wave's climax.

Cameo, snow-bound
white-isleted, stilled figure solo
on floe-graved agate—
does the knife-notched goddess know
once she gloried in Father's arms not Mother's,
moving, as in parallax
obscured, in infinite waves and counterfeit fires?

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Birthday 28

This river-tended life.

Many gifts from mountain peaks

move through its veins,

many strains of village soil layer its field.

From many sides, life's fluid mystery

streams from grain to grain.

From east and west, many song-weavings

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surround its awakening from dream.

The world's river-messenger

that brings the far near,

that brings to the door a welcome of the unknown,

has formed my birthday.

Carried by its current always

untethered, my moving nest

floats from bank to bank.

I am an outcast, a nomad.

Many grains of flowing hospitality

over and over fill my birthday bowl.

February 28, 1941 (afternoon)

Translated from the Bengali by Wendy Barker and Saranindranath Tagore

JUAN CARLOS GALEANO

Kites

Because we lacked paper to make kites, we flew our windows.

The windows with their white aprons told us what they saw.

But the Indians who saw our windows flying had neither house nor windows to fly, let alone a kite.

It was only natural that the Indians would want to fly something.

In exchange for rotten fish, the circling vultures let strings be tied around their necks and served as kites for the Indians.

Translated from the Spanish by Angela Ball

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SHARONA BEN-TOV

The Invisible Mine

In the Sun Tower

THIS IS A STORY about how the marriage of science and war broke a great man's heart. It begins, for me, on the road winding through an Israeli landscape that resembled a cross between a kibbutz and a Star Trek set. Along the road, domes of ficus trees rose into a deep blue sky, and a gardener walked by with a mud-caked hoe over his shoulder. But where you expected to see a tractor, you saw a group of Chinese men in lab coats. And then a sleek concrete tower, fifteen stories high, with a strip of windows down its center.

I entered the tower, as instructed in the telephone message that I'd received the night before, took the elevator to the top floor, and walked into a vast loft that resounded with metallic crashes, screeches, and thunks. This was the sound of a shutter opening in the far wall, which split from ceiling to floor in a line of sun. A dark figure advanced with the steps of confident old age, and nodded. The noise stopped.

"You look just like your father," Avram rumbled. His heavy face was sunk in his neck, and one of his faded blue eyes had a cast. I watched him scrutinize my father in my face. Then he said, "Come see the field of mirrors." Our steps echoed as we approached the strip of light in the wall. I looked down the sheer drop to a clearing of very bright dirt, where white pillars stood in semicircles, holding up rectangular mirrors. The tilted mirrors kept a sacral stillness.

"They're being repaired," Avram said, "but when they're operating, they focus a sheaf of sunlight, a super-ray, straight through this window where we're standing into the solar reactor. There the ray gets very hot, in fact," he rummaged in his pocket, "this hot."

He brought out a stone disk, yellowish and flat except for the center, which had melted into a mustard teardrop.

I edged away from the window.

"How many degrees is that ray?" I asked. Avram's good eye darkened in amusement, and he followed me to a pair of folding chairs, where we sat.

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"In some experiments, nearly the heat of the sun's surface," he replied, and paused. "But we cannot cheat nature. We cannot concentrate the sun's light until it is hotter than the sun from which it comes." In English, he added, "That is apparently against the First Principles."

"Oh, Avram, are there really First Principles?" I was surprised into asking. It was the most comforting thing I'd ever heard, unassailable ground rules that accounted for the world, and perhaps for my being in it. Avram didn't answer; his bent, octogenarian hands rested on his knees. "It's amazing that my father never told me about the Science Corps," I hinted. "I heard of it by accident. . . ." A smile glowed in his still visage.

"You've come to the right person for that history," he granted. And from Avram's exact, laconic words I imagined the story that I'm telling *here fifty years after Israel's war of independence—and twenty years* after my father died without ever having mentioned the Science Corps to his only child.

Hell Car

FIFTY YEARS AGO, long before Avram directed the solar reactor at the Weizmann Institute, I imagine he must have been one of those young men—blond, big-browed, keen, and stolid—whose clear idea of their future gives them a marvellous air of command. When the bookseller led his white-nosed donkey through the university campus, Avram, surely, did not dash up. A girl got there first. The donkey lipped the sugar in her hand as a kerchief fluttered above her rolled, shining bangs; and Avram smiled, charmed, but not to the point of overexcitement. He rummaged through the saddlebags knowing what he needed and what he was prepared to pay.

He saw his future as a garden overlooking terraced mountains, in the middle of which stood a rustic table flanked by fruit trees. Seated at the head, his broad palm covering the small paw of a valiant wife, he would quote the psalm about one's children being like olive shoots around one's table. His professional life would be equally satisfying. He respected nature, whose laws seemed to him like discreet promises that were always kept.

This well-ordered young man joined the troubled throng on the porch of the National Library. From between the limestone columns, on the summit of Mount Scopus, people with books under their arms were craning their necks, gabbling and pointing toward Jerusalem: the walled

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huddle of the Old City, and West Jerusalem sprawled in apartment blocks over the hills. Near the finger of the YMCA tower, black smoke flowed into the sky.

I don't know if, at that moment, Avram saw his career in the Science Corps, or the Hell Car that began it. But Hell Cars occur under certain conditions that clear-sighted people anticipate. I think that this is what he foresaw, and what in fact happened, during the winter siege of '48.

For it is one thing to sit out a Jerusalem winter reading professional journals and drinking hot tea, while a little kerosene stove flickers red and blue, shedding rosy warmth on the files and the sleeping cat. It is quite another thing to pass the winter without kerosene. Also without food, because the trucks carrying produce and supplies to Jerusalem were stopped at British roadblocks, stripped of their weapons, and sent into Arab ambushes along the mountain pass.

The university closed. Faculty grumbled about their students scattered through the underground, to ride point on convoys and smuggle grenades under their skirts, instead of focussing on their dissertations. Professors went home and collected from their children the dirty leaves of wild geraniums, plucked in the park by gangs of fighting kids who didn't care that they were all Jews. December skies opened: Jerusalemites tottered against a mind-stripping wind, through puddles that rocked like seas, their shoes breaking the ice over yellow mud. The night streets were black. Candles flickered in cafés as smoke-filled as rations allowed. West Jerusalem was unemployed. People went out at night to cluster together and keep the frostbite off their souls. The Workers Cooperative Restaurant served a dim beverage that people nursed as they talked with a truck driver from a coastal kibbutz.

"What's happening," they asked, "to all the milk we used to drink?"

"Jerusalem was our largest client," the kibbutznik shrugged, so much flesh on his shoulders and jowls. "Now we make cheese, butter, yogurt, we drink milk at meals instead of fruit juice. We even feed milk to the cows."

Only knowing that the driver had risked his life in a food convoy kept the rage from their grins. And hunger was just one face of the war. In cold apartments, people camped in the rooms that still had ceilings. As you washed the dishes, a bullet cracked against the faucet. Every window in West Jerusalem was afflicted with a mange of cardboard. Sleep was wrecked by the loud retching and monkey chatter of Bren and Sten guns.

That is what Avram foresaw from the porch of the National Library, and the reason he remained on the deserted university campus. He sat

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in the blacked-out library with a flashlight, studying machine guns, mortars, propellants, and explosives. He slept on a cot in the lab, beside the optic spectrometer. With other students who would join the Science Corps, he broke into restricted cabinets and made off with all the sulphuric acid his heart desired.

If you've been to a planetarium, you know how the stars slide as the long-barreled projector turns and alters attitude. The swirling white pinpoints reach new coordinates and the dome is filled with an unfamiliar sky. So, I believe, with Avram. On the walls of his capacious mind, he repositioned his needs, aims, and dreams. Then he was ready for the Hell Car, as such cars are still called.

AT SIX-THIRTY IN THE MORNING, Avram was thrown out of his cot onto the floor. He shook himself and looked down at his watch and his cup, now in pieces, though he'd left them both on the windowsill. The noise was so overwhelming that he couldn't hear around its edges, and took a second to connect it with the shattered cup.

When he knew that the continual roar came from downtown, he commandeered a taxi on its way back from the Hadassah clinic. The driver babbled that two cars loaded with TNT, by British soldiers, had blown Ben Yehuda Street to high heaven. The driver's knuckles looked livid on his filthy hands—these days, it took a long time to save water rations for bathing. It was no reflection on the cabby that he looked like he'd been dug out of what he'd seen.

Though Avram did not describe it to me, I can guess, indeed I can document, what he saw on Ben Yehuda Street.

A human chain of guards repulsed a crowd. A man circulated in pajamas, clothes in his arms, putting them down and picking them up; he couldn't get dressed outdoors in the midst of shouting crowds. Flames nodded from crumbled buildings as a bulldozer moved a foundation, and corpses were carried out on stretchers. Entire families in pajamas were digging with cutlery, calling names into the holes they made. Avram, squeezing between backs and elbows, registered the fact that his favorite café was a pit surrounded by stones. He assisted the rescue team handing out sandwiches, while a matron in pink flannel shrieked at him: the Strausses who'd lived over her for twenty years were now in the basement! and the sandwiches stank! they were an outrage. Avram agreed they could be better. He spotted a British tank in the street and ducked further into the crowd, but not before he saw the man on the tank—a subaltern, shoulder flashes of the Royal Engineers, tidy, aloof, put off. Back to the lab, Avram thought. He turned to go and

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buildings subsided, grumbling and roaring through squalls of shattered glass, just as everyone thought they had their losses counted.

One vision filled Avram's mind: a string of pebbles, unworthy of notice, mere bumps on any road. They were the invisible mine.

Ben Yehuda Street was the second time that a British Hell Car had been detonated in Jewish territory. Avram was determined to stop British cars. Since it was against the law for Jews to man roadblocks, the best alternative was a landmine; since the law also forbade Jews to carry weapons, the mine had to be invisible. Avram's mine is still used today, and he would not describe it. When I asked, he answered in the mode I have come to call the Israeli Security Tautology: "The mine was invisible because. . .it was designed not to be seen." My description comes from hints and a Yiddish nickname which you surely don't expect me to repeat.

Not a Platonic Symposium

"I WAS THERE," Avram continued as I sat jotting down his tale, "at the precise moment your father came to the Science Corps."

I wrote a new heading, underlining it several times.

"I met your father in the Studio. That was the Science Corps' first headquarters, a shed on the roof of an actor's apartment in downtown Tel Aviv. I had come there because I'd received an order from Genka Ratner." Ratner, Avram explained, was a Haifa native who had worked for the British Navy at Portsmouth, where he had invented the limpet mine. After the Second World War, Ratner's requests to return to Palestine were denied until he faked a serious illness and begged his superior officers to let him die in the land of his fathers. "Thanks to the sentimentality of the English," Avram mused, "we got Genka, the only qualified inventor in the country, to command us. He was famed for his Russian cursing. We lived in fear that a British agent would overhear Genka when he was in full cry. He gave me an assistant, a boy called Uri Paltiel."

I said, "Oh my!" just as Avram had expected, and he looked smug.

"Back then," he confided, "Uri was only a skinny squirt who irritated me because he criticized my mine."

Impatient to hear about my father, I was still beguiled by the scene that rose to my eyes: a rooftop, at the hour when the upper stories of Tel Aviv are glazed in a red glow. Three men lurked among the ducts, watertanks and clearings of orange sky. Avram, doughty, sandals

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planted in the soft tar. Genka, with the black light that hovered around his gaunt, uniformed frame, his narrow jaw seeming to quiver with stored invective. The one doing the talking was Uri, who looked not at Avram's scowling face but to his side, where a new star pricked the sunset.

"The mine is a going concern," Avram growled, interrupting.

"It ought to be round," Uri repeated, absorbed in the sight of an ideal invisible mine slightly to Avram's left, in the vicinity of Venus, "and the multiswitch ought to fit inside the lid."

"When a thing works," Avram boomed, "you don't have to make a Platonic symposium out of it!"

Of course, he admitted to me, Uri was right. The mine needed to be round, yet Avram always remembered being angry that the boy—whom no one dreamed would become famous—had dared to criticize. I sensed that it wronged Avram's sense of natural order. The veteran of a winter siege shouldn't have to kowtow to a stripling in love with the sky.

Among Inventors

"NOW I CAN TELL you about your father's arrival," Avram continued. I bore down on my notepad with another heading, the real one this time. "One morning between ten and eleven, I was working in the Studio when the door opened. I looked up, and there was a tall, strangely happy man with a jute sack over his shoulder. He untied the sack and took out a small-caliber recoilless rifle, which consisted of a piece of pipe, a stopper in one end, and a revolving ammunition chamber. It was like a homemade toy. Genka looked it over and said, 'We'll develop this.' As for your father," Avram finished, "he was always—I must use the English word—*exuberant*."

That was the end of the story about my father.

It was no more than a verbal snapshot of a young man beaming in a doorway. To give the picture depth, I had to imagine the history behind him: the taste of the last Turkish coffee he'd sipped in the circle of his own kibbutz; his first wife watching from the armored truck as he waved goodbye; the potato sack slung on his turned-away shoulder. I saw that I would have to forgive his exuberance. When he'd handed the homemade rifle to Genka Ratner, it stopped being the thingamajig that had nearly killed poor Comrade Tzipi in the tractor shed, and became his passport to the world he was born for—the world of invention. No more wasting his gifts as the mechanic of a small farm tucked between

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dunes. Now he was with the military research branch of the government, among his peers at last. I'd have to forgive him for being happy to leave the kibbutz that had shared everything with him. And for leaving the first of the women in his life.

I THOUGHT SUDDENLY of a moment when I was eighteen years old and visiting my father's home in Wayland, Massachusetts. That day, for some reason, he took both me and his third wife walking through the woods behind his house. A stranger would have seen nothing disturbing. He might have noticed that the women on either side of the man didn't match; the wife fragile in linen, with a silver ankh pendant and a breathless voice; the daughter much taller, in denim, her hair a bouncy 'fro. Nothing foreshadowed the widow who would tell a legal firm that the father had never loved his daughter. The stranger would have had to notice how the slight woman never addressed me, or looked in my direction, even when I stepped past my father and tried to catch her eye, asking, "Do cooked vegetables have auras too?"

My father stopped before a stand of birches, one tree surrounded by four others, like a white candelabrum. He walked into the grove and laid his palm against the big tree's papery bark. I never forgot his expression; my usually exuberant father looked hungry and alone.

"This is the father," he murmured aloud, "and these are his sons."

It would be four more years until he spoke of it, but I knew that the father on his mind was his own, lost to the Nazis. I wanted him to turn around and see me. I tugged in my heart and felt only a loose end. He wasn't attached. He was trying to connect himself to a tall, beautiful plant that held more memories for him than I did. I understood then that something important was missing from my father.

Avram looked very pleased to have placed a memory into the mind of the person to whom it properly belonged. That was Avram Pardes: a keeper of the world's decorum. I looked wistfully into his good eye, in his old wizard face, and asked him to continue.

The President and the Kindergarten

THE SCIENCE CORPS quickly outgrew the Studio, Avram summarized. After independence it expanded into the Weizmann Institute at Rehovot, a village in a sea of dunes. Since the thirties, Rehovot's glory had been its grapefruit, which appeared in newsreels, thundering down chutes. They were the product of the Sieff agricultural school. And this

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citrus-proud village, with its scientific orchards, is the place where Avram's story—as I see it—expands into the dimension of tragedy.

The Sieff school had been founded by Chaim Weizmann, a national hero. It was Weizmann who, in 1917, persuaded Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to support the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Weizmann was an eminent chemist whose work had meant a great deal to Britain in the First World War. My favorite thing about him is his reply to Balfour, who, in his memoirs, claimed to have rewarded the chemist with the gift of a home for his people. Weizmann responded, "History doesn't deal in Aladdin's lamps." You'd think the man who penned that wry dictum would have known the difference between visions and illusions.

Weizmann's vision in founding Sieff had been of a scientific institute which would solve problems of hunger and disease in developing nations. And the other man without whom Israel wouldn't exist, David Ben-Gurion, spoiled that vision.

Ben-Gurion and Weizmann were enemies fighting on the same side. They both wanted a Jewish state. They were both leading statesmen, public figures, but about as alike as Sir Laurence Olivier and Muhammad Ali. They rubbed each other the wrong way, and where Weizmann was chivalrous, Ben-Gurion could be mean. It was Weizmann who swayed Truman into backing the Partition vote. You'd think, wouldn't you, that Weizmann's signature would be on Israel's declaration of independence? No. Ben-Gurion said no, because at the time of the signing Weizmann was in New York—where he'd lobbied till the last second although he was elderly, feeble, and nearly blind. Weizmann was appointed Israel's first president, a figurehead job, flown back from the States and installed at Sieff, now renamed, in his honor, the Weizmann Institute. I saw a newsreel of the inauguration ceremony: sun beating through a pavilion, Ben-Gurion rasping on and on at the podium, Weizmann standing there. He had no political power left, and knew it. But he had his Institute. Then the Science Corps arrived.

There were strange doings around the campus. Weizmann should have heard only voices, birdsong, and the hum of intellectual endeavor; he shouldn't have felt thuds through the bones of his old feet. He shouldn't have had to stop, baffled, in front of the Institute's new building, where something very odd was scrambling in the gravel yard. It looked like a child's toy, with scooter wheels and a motor. As he shuffled toward it he heard cries of alarm, and shadowy men swooped down on it and carried it off. He beckoned to no one in particular and asked,

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"What is that contraption?" A man advanced till Weizmann could see his soft young face and the lieutenant's bars on his shoulders.

"Automatic dog, sir," answered the boy, and added, swallowing hard, "mechanics experiment."

"Indeed," Weizmann said, pausing, "automatic dog." He was not a fool. There were uniformed personnel all over the grounds, but then, there was a war on.

He shouldn't have had to deal with the cook, Mrs. Bach, rushing into his presidential office brandishing a pan of fried cutlets. Mrs. Bach insisted that the president do something to stop those rapscallions from firing their cannon that made the ceiling shower plaster on her schnitzels. Now she had nothing but salad to feed the cytobiologist from Denmark.

Weizmann took action. The Science Corps was forbidden the use of the Institute dining hall—let them eat with the rest of the army at Soldiers Restaurant. He wrote to friends and aides. He deplored the use of science for instruments of destruction like the atomic bomb; his legacy was meant for peaceful development, and the use of the Institute by the army was a betrayal and a waste. But it was one thing to write indignant letters while keeping the ugly facts as unobtrusive as possible. It was quite another thing to stumble onto the invisible mine factory.

Everyone called it the kindergarten. When Genka had asked Avram what he needed at Weizmann, Avram had said, "Four girls and a room." He got a room in the Institute's new building, one floor above the marble-paved lobby where a bronze bust of Einstein presided. He also got four sixteen-year-old soldiers. A waggish colleague had drawn a large cartoon and hung it on Avram's door. It showed four baby girls playing with dolls, and a harassed Avram boiling diapers.

The girls spent all day assembling round, invisible mines. They treated Avram like all commanders, with affectionate persiflage, but mostly forgot he was there. He listened to their conversation. The workshop was an easy duty after the convoys, about which they chattered all day.

"I get into Jerusalem," one of them would say, clipping wires, "and as I leave the unloading point, someone grabs my arm, and it's my *mother*," her voice underlined. "So I ask, 'How did you know to get here?' and instead of answering she starts pulling my arms and saying, 'Your old mama isn't so stupid after all, come home, you're not betraying any secrets,' and I tell her, 'Mama, this is impossible, I have to report to headquarters.'"

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The four would look up and their busy hands stop for a second, until one of them sighed, "That's it, they try to protect you, and they're the noncombatants."

"'Let mama sew you some nice new pants,'" whined the third girl, and they burst out laughing. "Like I haven't patched every pair of pants in the unit, with twine when we ran out of thread."

"I don't go home," said the fourth girl. "I can't take it."

Avram would interrupt the talk when it chafed too much against his sense of natural order.

ON THIS PARTICULAR DAY, there had already been one catastrophe. An Egyptian Spitfire had flown over earlier, and a sizeable explosion had been heard. Then Meir from the ballistics lab had gone to Lippmann Brothers for some bolts and come back all shaken up. The hardware store was flattened and the bodies of both Lippmanns had been removed. The Science Corps mourned the able brothers who had conspired with them on the robot dog. Getting hardware was also going to be tougher.

Afterwards, Avram was supervising the mine workshop when a knock came at the door. He opened it and was shocked. Weizmann in his cravat and black suit was thin as a bookmark, a goatee fraying off his chin. He leaned on the arm of David Bergmann, a brilliant VIP who drove Avram crazy. Bergmann was the type who would light a cigarette while talking, forgetting the one already in his mouth. Now he'd really blown it. He hadn't steered Weizmann clear of the office where, naturally, the poster-sized cartoon was bound to make the president wonder aloud, "What is going on here?"

"Mister President," Avram said, full of pity and alarm, "your visit honors us." He tried to shut the door behind him as the girls' hands rose to their lips, but Weizmann hobbled right into his chest and made him back into the room. Squinting at the cluttered table, the president asked, "What is being produced here?" Avram looked at Bergmann, who gawked. Avram looked down at Weizmann.

You have to understand the old gentleman's stature. For half a century, he had been called the Jewish people's ambassador to the world's heads of state. He was one of his nation's immortals.

"Mines," Avram Pardes told Chaim Weizmann. He saw no point in calling them invisible.

The president began to tremble with misery and rage. He was pathetic and terrifying. He spoke in a shaking, clear voice as if to a formal assembly.

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"This is a scientific institute. It is not a munitions factory."

Avram doesn't remember what he said as Weizmann, still clamped onto Bergmann, let himself be led away amid Bergmann's complicated apologies.

The girls' hands were still at their lips, but not covering smiles. Avram closed the door.

"What does he expect?" asked one of the girls, hushed but angry. "We have to make weapons. How does he expect us to fight?"

Avram tried to explain the dream of the Weizmann Institute. It was like his own: a family gathering in a garden. Instead of sons and daughters, around the table would be seated Arab kingdoms and African tribes, India and Vietnam, and our old trading partners, the Chinese. They would pass their plates and we would serve the dishes of the Institute, sharing our grapefruit orchards and carp fisheries, water purification systems and genetically improved cereals. Everyone would see that sharing with us was better than fighting us.

"But the Egyptians are bombing Rehovot," the girls objected.

"Sometimes, visions must be postponed," he replied.

The Final Test

"How can you tell?" I asked Avram after he told me about the president and the kindergarten. "How do you know when a vision is just postponed, and when it's an illusion to begin with?"

"You assess the facts and probabilities," he answered. "Then you work and wait."

I liked this. My father would have said that you could find out anything by sitting down, meditating, and tuning in to the Universal Mind. That's what he did for three hours every morning, before entering the lab. He would have suggested a session with his transcendometer, to see if the top of my skull produced the right ballisto-cardiac signal, 7 Hz, for tuning into the higher realities. Once, when I was sixteen and as logical as Mister Spock, I asked my father if his theory of the universe could be tested. He replied that my whole western science was no damn good. What bothered me was his calling it my western science. I didn't feel up to the responsibility.

Perhaps, I thought, my father had been missing a sense of connection to time, to promise and fulfillment, to his place in the order of generations. He'd wanted a universe with instant answers. I wondered

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what could have made him feel my presence, following behind him, among the birches.

"Time is the final test, then?" I asked.

"Time," Avram agreed, and gestured to the solar reactor with its blackened gooseneck pipes. "The reactor is my vision now. The only way to work on such a project with a quiet heart is to accept that you will not finish it." He gave me a kind, mulling look.

"That," he said, "is for future generations."

I felt as though a father had given me his blessing.

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KENNETH SHERMAN

The Necessity of Poetry: Anthony Hecht's "The Book of Yolek"

Anthony Hecht was a witness to the Holocaust. He served with the U.S. 97th infantry and participated in the liberation of Flossenburg, an annex of Buchenwald. It was in Flossenburg that Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged, only days before the camp was liberated. In a conversation with Philip Hoy, Hecht revealed the shocking nature of his experience: "When we arrived. . .prisoners were dying at the rate of five hundred a day from typhus. . . .The place, the suffering, the prisoners' accounts were beyond comprehension. For years after I would wake shrieking."

So it is not surprising that the Holocaust is a persistent subject in Hecht's oeuvre. It provides the ironic conclusion to "It Out-Herods Herod. Pray You. Avoid It" and is the central concern of the much-anthologized "More Light! More Light!" In my opinion, "The Book of Yolek," which first appeared in *The New Statesman* in 1982—thirty-eight years after the initial shock—is one of the most powerful Holocaust poems ever published.

The Book of Yolek

Wir Haben ein Gesetz,
*Und nach dem Gesetz soll er sterben.**

The dowsed coals fume and hiss after your meal
Of grilled brook trout, and you saunter off for a walk
Down the fern trail. It doesn't matter where to,
Just so you're weeks and worlds away from home,
And among midsummer hills have set up camp
In the deep bronze glories of declining day.

* We have a law and according to the law he must die.

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You remember, peacefully, an earlier day
In childhood, remember a quite specific meal:
A corn roast and bonfire in summer camp.
That summer you got lost on a Nature Walk;
More than you dared admit, you thought of home:
No one else knows where the mind wanders to.

The fifth of August, 1942.
It was the morning and very hot. It was the day
They came at dawn with rifles to The Home
For Jewish Children, cutting short the meal
Of bread and soup, lining them up to walk
In close formation off to a special camp.

How often you have thought about that camp,
As though in some strange way you were driven to,
And about the children, and how they were made to walk,
Yolek who had bad lungs, who wasn't a day
Over five years old, commanded to leave his meal
And shamble between armed guards to his long home.

We're approaching August again. It will drive home
The regulation torments of that camp
Yolek was sent to, his small, unfinished meal,
The electric fences, the numeral tattoo,
The quite extraordinary heat of the day
They all were forced to take that terrible walk.

Whether on a silent, solitary walk
Or among crowds, far off or safe at home,
You will remember, helplessly, that day,
And the smell of smoke, and the loudspeakers of the camp.
Wherever you are, Yolek will be there, too.
His unuttered name will interrupt your meal.

Prepare to receive him in your home some day.
Though they killed him in the camp they sent him to,
He will walk in as you're sitting down to a meal.

The poem is a sestina, and Hecht's use of a classical form to treat his subject is striking. I say this because the very notion of form has been suspect among many poets who have dealt with the Holocaust, particularly those from Eastern Europe. In their attempt to confront the hor-

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ror and name the unnameable, poets such as Czeslaw Milosz, Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Rózewicz, and János Pilinszky committed themselves to a dry, laconic anti-poetry. They displayed a powerful ambivalence toward the very work they were creating, mistrusting it for outlasting the Catastrophe and, in the words of Rózewicz, "for having survived when those who created the poetry were dead." Their resentment and unease were crystallized in the now-famous utterance of the philosopher and cultural critic Theodor Adorno: "After Auschwitz it is barbaric to write poetry." Under the weight of such a confrontational statement, poets approached the blank page with a heightened sense of accountability. They goaded themselves into discovering poetic strategies that would enable them to draw embers from the ashes. Such an enterprise required them to be vulnerable to the savagery their century had witnessed and to do that they felt the need to relinquish the strict conventions and structures of classical poetry—conventions which, in their opinion, tended to shield the poet from the truth of experience. Czeslaw Milosz, in his book *The Witness of Poetry*, quarrels with classicism because it tempts the poet to "surrender to merely graceful writing," and prevents or limits "a passionate pursuit of the Real." In his book *Government of the Tongue*, Seamus Heaney beautifully encapsulates Milosz's argument:

> Classicism, in this definition, becomes a negative aspect of the Horatian *dulce*, a matter of conventional ornament, a protective paradigm of the way things are, drawn from previous readings of the world which remain impervious to new perceptions and which are therefore deleterious to the growth of consciousness.

Heaney, a traditionalist who himself has employed classical poetic structures to render the dire reality of Northern Ireland, leaves room for a different understanding of classicism by qualifying what he says about it with "in this definition." Indeed, in "The Book of Yolek" we see how effective classical structure can be in dealing with one of history's most problematic events.

In the sestina pattern, the end words of the first stanza are repeated in strict order throughout the poem. The resulting echoes and reverberations open the possibility for endless layers of irony and for a shifting between past and present occurrences. The repetition of word and syllable creates a mirroring effect, where words look either backwards or forwards to their prophetic doubles. It is this intense doubling that often distinguishes poetry from prose and which prompts us to read a poem

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again and again. Verse comes from the Latin *vertere*, which means, "to turn around." And turning around, one looks again, reconsiders. Once we have read "The Book of Yolek" and know its import, we turn back to the first stanza and are discomforted to see that even though we are fishing and camping in some arcadia, those "coals that fume and hiss" are ominous. We know too that one of our end words, "camp," is suddenly charged with the significance of its disturbing historical double, and that the last phrase of the stanza, "declining day," is preparing us for a descent into Night.

From the beginning of the poem we are faced with the fact that the innocence of the present has been contaminated with the crimes of the past. We can no longer take the language at face value. History has imbued it with a disquieting, connotative presence. And it is not only words that are doubling, but intonation as well. The opening phrase of the second stanza can be heard not only as a mild, introductory statement, but also as an injunction—"You remember." For that of course is the moral intent of the poem: to prohibit forgetfulness. And what is it we are remembering? We have moved from the present of the first stanza to the reader's childhood summer spent at camp. We are still free to get lost "on a Nature Walk," which seems "worlds away" from the "terrible walk" Yolek and his fellow orphans will later be forced to take. We are still "peacefully" leading an idyllic existence, sitting before a bonfire, and feeling slightly homesick. But the stanza ends with the portentous line, "No one else knows where the mind wanders to." Hecht is preparing us for a major leap—across an ocean—to a different sort of home and camp.

In his perceptive study *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell uses the phrase "irony-assisted recall" to account for the triggering mechanism that allows war's survivors and witnesses to remember disturbing incidents. To assist in bringing forth those memories, what is required, according to Fussell, is the application of "a paradigm of ironic action." Where the mind wanders to, then, is not so much a place as a thought: How incredible to think, Hecht insinuates, that on that very day ("The fifth of August, 1942") when you were a child at a summer camp, another child was being forced to walk to a "special camp." This ironic awareness links us to Yolek and thrusts us into an anti-world where the safety of home and the certainty of our daily meal are forever shattered. The adjective "special" adds to the poem's ironic baggage, for it calls to mind the host of Nazi euphemisms: "final solution," "special treatment," and "prompt deployment unit" (*Einsatzkommando*)—the name given to the death squads.

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What is remarkable is how much the poem is able to say about the Holocaust as a psychic phenomenon. Already in stanza four we are thinking of the camp as though "driven to." The orphans are "made to walk." We are now far from the freedom of the first two stanzas, when it was possible to saunter or become innocently lost. Just as Yolek's fate is inescapable, so too, it seems, is our thinking of it. And that thinking is tinged with the darkest irony, for Yolek is off to "his long home." The longest home anyone has, of course, is death. "Shamble" also has its double, resonating with the noun "shambles"—a slaughterhouse.

Stanza five stands out for two reasons. First, we have a change in the use of pronoun. Hecht has been using the morally implicating "you." This is somewhat different from the recriminatory "*tu*" of Baudelaire's "Au Lecteur" or the accusatory "you" of Wilfred Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum Est" with its indicting lines, "If in some smothering dreams you too could pace / Behind the wagon that we flung him in. . . .If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood / Come gargling from the froth corrupted lungs. . . ." Hecht's reader is not the smug and oblivious Jessie Pope (the original addressee of Owen's poem) who was largely representative of her English compatriots. Hecht is addressing us: modern readers who have seen the film footage of the camps and heard the survivors' accounts. If we are complacent it is not through ignorance. Just the opposite: we are likely to be overinformed and jaded. Therefore a contemporary poet's tactics have to be subtler than Owen's.

So in stanza five it is not "you" but rather "we" that are addressed. The poem becomes inclusive and universal. We are all approaching that August when the memory of Yolek's death will be driven home. "They all were forced to take that terrible walk." All who are sensitive to the Holocaust have, in some imaginative way, taken "that terrible walk." The second difference in this stanza is the absence of irony. We have arrived at the camp and irony would only act as a buffer, preventing us from taking in the stark reality of "the electric fences," "the numeral tattoo."

Stanza six returns us to the present. But we are transformed: No matter where we are or what we are doing, we will remember "The smell of smoke, the loudspeakers of the camp." But which smoke and camp is the poet referring to? The summer camp or the death camp? It turns out to be the latter, but during this moment of ambiguity these two pasts are linked in the reader's mind. The summer camp has been transformed into the concentration camp and we have become like survivors "who will remember helplessly." Helplessness—impotence in the face of fellow

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inmates' suffering—was what the actual survivors had to endure and accounts for their abiding guilt.

It seems certain that the orphan Yolek will not be remembered; for him, no one will survive to recite *Kaddish*—the prayer for the dead. This is the implication of "unuttered name." But in keeping with the paradoxical nature of the poem, this is not the case. Though Yolek's name is unuttered, already in the second-to-last stanza he has become omnipresent: "Wherever you are, Yolek will be there too"—providing us with a presentiment of his final status. It is Yolek's utter absence that is about to become a supreme presence. Perhaps *the* supreme presence, for it should be noted that in Judaism one may only speak the substitute names for God—His actual name must remain "unuttered."

The last stanza, the tercet, begins with an injunction typically reserved for royalty—"Prepare to receive him. . . ." Just as soldiers interrupted Yolek's meal, so he, in keeping with the poem's reversals and ironies, will interrupt ours—but for a very different purpose. In literature, ghosts often appear because we have done them an injustice: Palinurus returns to remind Aeneas that his body was left unburied; the ghost of murdered Banquo appears to Macbeth as the usurper sits down to a meal. Hecht's poem has a religious theme, indicated by the biblical nature of the title, and Yolek's reappearance leads us to the Gospels.

To understand why, we must deal with the poem's epigraph. It is taken from the Gospel of John (19:7). The Jews made this response to Pontius Pilate concerning the fate of Jesus and this is an obvious reference to the blame they have had to endure for their supposed involvement in the Crucifixion. Hecht's decision to quote from Luther's translation is intended to remind German Christians of their complicity in the Holocaust. In another segment from his conversation with Philip Hoy, Hecht states:

> It is the Vatican's dubious position that German anti-Semitism as it was exhibited under the Nazis "had its roots outside Christianity," and that the people who ran the camps were essentially pagan. This, however, fails to agree with the Nazis' own view of the matter.

Hecht then refers to Peter Matheson's documentary account, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, which cites a German report of 1944, claiming that only 3.5 percent of Germans were self-declared "neo-pagans." The inference is that whether lapsed or practicing, most perpetrators of the Holocaust thought themselves Christian. In "The Book of Yolek," Hecht is continuing the argument made by several postwar Christian theologians, including Rosemary Reuther (*Faith and*

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Fratricide) and Franklin Littel (*The Crucifixion of the Jews*), who hold Christian teaching accountable for sowing the seeds of the Holocaust.

Hecht's Yolek is Jewish; yet in another profound reversal he has, by interrupting our meal, become Christ. In two of the Gospels, Mark and Luke, the resurrected Jesus appears during the disciples' meal. In Mark, He "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of hearts"; in Luke, He asks the "terrified and affrighted" disciples "why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Yolek, the murdered Jewish child, has in spirit returned as the discomfiting Hebrew prophet, reminding us of our complicity in his Crucifixion.

"The Book of Yolek" is not an anti-Christian poem. As literature must, it shuns dogma while leading us to a more complex sense of the Real. The poem rightly holds Christianity accountable for its role in the Holocaust; yet by turning Yolek into Christ, Hecht reminds Christianity of its moral imperative. The poem exposes the hypocrisy and eruptive barbarism of Western civilization; yet its success as a work of art is an affirmation. Its unadorned language, its restrained voice of moral authority, and its strict pattern bring home (to use one of the poem's end words) the tragedy of a small child. By implication, Hecht is imploring us to inquire after today's Yoleks. It seems to me that he has effgfectively countered Adorno, so that we might say, "After Auschwitz it is necessary to write poetry."

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AVIYA KUSHNER

How One Nation Mourns a Poet

YEHUDA AMICHAI DIED ON A FRIDAY, the day when Jerusalem, his home city and his muse, busies itself preparing for Shabbat. Tomatoes, chickens, and challah bread fill the plastic bags people carry from the *shuk*, the open-air market. Fresh food is transported on the bus, the bags balanced on knees squeezed into the narrow red seats—if one is lucky enough to get a seat—and then slowly carried up the stairs back home. White shirts and pressed black hats color the city at night, and after the wail of the siren announces sundown, the sounds of the Friday night welcoming-the-Shabbat service—*come in, bride, come in, bride*—eventually ring from the synagogues.

Friday is not a good day for death, but all day the airwaves crackled with Amichai's poems. On the bus, people mouthed the words they knew. The funeral would have to wait until after the holy day, but the words didn't wait:

> God has pity on kindergarten children.
> He has less pity on school children.
> And on grownups he has no pity at all,
> he leaves them alone,

At this point I heard sobs on the bus. But the poem continued:

> and sometimes they must crawl on all fours
> in the burning sand
> to reach the first-aid station
> covered with blood.

These are words every Israeli knows by heart, words people went to war with and buried sons with. Those lines resonate because Israelis know too well that leaving school often means going to war, and sometimes going to death. Amichai gave that terrible truth form.

But Amichai also supplied words to make love to—words many have told me they love because they are so plainly about love. Even at his

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most political and most anti-religious, Amichai was still a tremendously sensual poet. Here, for example, he asks for a burial ritual that diverges from strict tradition, because the Chevra Kadisha members are always the same gender as the deceased. But the focus, for Amichai, was still the body, always the body:

> When I die, I want only women to handle me in the Chevra Kadisha
> and to do with my body as they please: cleanse my ears of the last words I heard, wipe my lips of the last words I said,
> erase the sights I saw from my eyes, smooth my brow of worries
> and fold my arms across my chest like the sleeves of a shirt after ironing.

In the creased and tanned faces around me, raptly listening to the radio, I saw pain. I also saw sparkle, what I thought were remembrances of Amichai's humor, his moving and erotic lines about, say, his wife's shoes, or a woman's hair. Amichai was aware of the little things, as in this passage in his latest book, *Open Closed Open*, which includes this advice to his twentysomething daughter:

> Don't forget the tremendous power of hair that fans out free and open,
> and the tremendous power of hair pulled back, coiled tight
> like a dancer's.

All around me, as people sweated their way home and fiercely held on to their Shabbat supplies as more riders crammed into the bus, I heard comments about seeing Amichai in the supermarket, before he got too sick to shop. This was a man who was around, who had been present.

By Sunday morning, the city's ubiquitous bulletin boards were overwhelmed with white signs framed in black lines: the classic announcement of a death in Israel. All through the city, those awful posters stared. Instead of the usual wife and children listed as mourners, there in black letters were the mayor of Jerusalem and the city's top officials listed as mourners. The city itself was listed as a mourner.

That struck no one as odd. Imagine New York City listed in the obituaries as the next-of-kin for one of its deceased writers. Amichai, of course, was Jerusalem's great friend. He wrote of her as a child, a lover, a companion, and an enigma. She was always on his mind, and he was

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always trying to understand her. In late September's frightening political climate, the city seemed more vulnerable without the man who wrote:

> A city that has a wall, as Jerusalem has,
> is like children who have a father,
> and neither wall nor father can protect them any longer.

For years, the poems and the poet protected the city, gave it strength in times of deep and cutting hardship. But what about the writer of those lines? I wanted to understand procedure, to understand etiquette in a case like this. How is a poet mourned, anyway, and by whom?

On the front page. That was the first surprise, the "how" of mourning, which I discovered that Sunday, the first working-day after Amichai's passing. A poet dies—true, a major world poet; true, a national treasure—and his picture covers the front page of every newspaper in the country.

Never have I felt more American than in the days immediately following Amichai's death. I realized then, walking around Jerusalem, that the country we are born in determines how we look at poets, at writers, and at remembering them. In Israel, a poet's death is personal stuff. Housewives and storeowners streamed to Amichai's funeral. At the bank, a key employee was out: *Amichai's funeral*, her co-worker told me, as if I should have guessed. Hundreds of people were cramming into Safra Square downtown to pay their respects.

My bank errand would have to wait, so I went for a coffee. In the corner of the coffee shop, there was a large maroon armchair covered with a ribbon. No one could sit there. "In memoriam, Yehuda Amichai," read the cardboard sign on the chair.

People I met assumed I had heard. "You must be in mourning," a journalist said to me on Saturday afternoon, over Shabbat lunch. This is the first thing he said to me, his opening line. He did not bother to introduce himself, all he knew was that the hostess told him I was interested in poetry. *You* must be in mourning?

Everyone was mourning. That was the "by whom" of mourning—the assumption on the streets, on the buses, at dinner tables throughout the country—that "the mourners" meant everyone. Before Shabbat, the mourning was on the radio, since it was too late for newsprint. Meir Shalev, the Israeli novelist, sobbed on the radio and said he "didn't know how he could live without Amichai's poems." Later, the newspapers sought out other poets for comment, and got novelists to write a few paragraphs explaining Amichai's importance to all of Israeli literature.

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How unusual, I found myself thinking, how un-American. I read all the newspapers that Sunday, openmouthed at the amount of coverage.

Here, then, is a brief summary of what the newspapers had to say. Israel's three major papers have different readerships, ranging from *Ha'aretz*, considered the most intellectual and basically the *New York Times* of Israel, to *Ma'ariv* and *Yediot Aharonot*, both middle-of-the-road tabloids that are written in simple Hebrew. Amichai was on the front page of all three. Imagine any American poet—living or dead—on the front page of the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, and *New York Newsday* on the same day. (I squinted hard, tried to imagine it, and could not.)

In *Ha'aretz*, the headline read "The Bread and Water of Poetry." It noted that though Amichai was considered in many ways a "national poet," he succeeded in discarding that label and remaining an "intimate" poet, a writer who always wrote in singular, not in plural.

The prime minister, Ehud Barak, issued a press release which *Ha'aretz* quoted: "We have lost one of the greatest creators in the State of Israel and in the Jewish nation." Barak said, "Amichai will be remembered not only for his writing but for his love of mankind, his deep tie to homeland, and his description of the horrors of war." Would an American president ever issue such a release? Could any of our recent presidents name three characteristics of any of our major poets' work?

There was something else, something critical which *Ha'aretz* noted, between its expected remarks calling Amichai "the father of modern Hebrew poetry" and "Israel's strongest candidate for the Nobel Prize." Amichai was a symbol of his generation of poet-soldiers. This was the generation of Jews who were born outside Israel—in Amichai's case, in Germany—and came and built the country both physically and culturally, to the point that they represent what an "Israeli" is. Yitzhak Rabin's Nobel acceptance speech, which included a line from an Amichai poem, is an example of Amichai and his generation's importance to the nation, which the newspaper noted.

Ma'ariv, the second major newspaper, also emphasized the parallels between Amichai's life and the life of the State. A German emigrant from an Orthodox home, the poet came to Jerusalem at age eleven, fell in love with the city, and never left it. He served in the British Army, then the Palmach—the pre-State fighting unit—and, of course, fought in the War of Independence. Amichai often drew on his war experiences to create what became classics of contemporary Hebrew poetry.

Yediot Aharonot emphasized the accessibility of Amichai's work. "When we read Amichai, we feel as if he has written his verse in our

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kitchen, in our living room, in our bedroom," Israeli novelist Amos Oz wrote in *Yediot*.

After a while, the eulogies got repetitive: the papers printed more or less the same information, and each devoted a generous amount of space. I counted three pages minimum in each. For a few days, there were additional articles, and of course, television and radio aired more reports. Clearly, people cared about this poet, and they cared about his poetry.

The amazing outpouring of public grief for Amichai startled me. Most of the public statements ended with "may his memory be blessed," a standard ending of eulogies. That word—*blessed*—got me thinking. When was the last time we Americans blessed our poets? Though the line is frequently used for the Jewish dead, how appropriate it seemed that a man who spent his life creating memory, arranging thoughts and events into language, shaping the most frightening facts and visions into streamlined and memorable form, is blessed for giving the nation this blessing.

I learned something in Jerusalem in those woozy, shell-shocked days when Amichai's poems crowded the airwaves and flooded the newspapers. The way to mourn a poet is to give thanks. The way to do it is to bless, openly and in public. Let me add my name, then, to the long and diverse list of Amichai's mourners, so wise and loud and obvious in their recognition of loss. *May his memory be blessed.*

Yehuda Amichai died on September 22, 2000, at the age of seventy-six. His most recent book, which many consider his magnum opus, was Open Closed Open *(Harcourt Brace), translated into English by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld. Several excerpts quoted here are from that book, while the first excerpt, "God has pity. . ." is from* The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai *(University of California Press). Amichai wrote twenty-five books of poetry, some of which have been translated into English, two novels, two short story books, and three children's books. Amichai's poems have been translated into thirty-seven languages, and he has had several English translators.*

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JULES OLITSKI

How My Art Gets Made

An artist's vision does not strike him in the face with an "Aha! Now I see the truth!" It lies quiescent; it waits. He finds it as his art gets made. I'm tempted to say that an artist's vision is his view of reality: how it works, how it's made, its structure, its design, its composition, its architecture. As G.K. Chesterton said, "It is the landscape of his dreams."

In the midsixties I was teaching at Bennington College. One day, I said to the students, "Let's go over to Shaftsbury and visit Ken Noland in his studio." They were eager to go. They knew who Ken was, of course. I say "of course" because Bennington art students famously know everything about art, even before they arrive at the college. Anyway, off we went.

At that time Anthony Caro was teaching at the college and happily joined us. So there we were in the noted artist's studio, surrounded by Ken's recent work lining the walls. My students made themselves comfortable, sprawled out on the floor, or slumped against a wall. I introduced them to Ken. Ken, a former teacher and a generous man, welcomed the opportunity our visit afforded. But silence. My students, all female, usually all too vocal sat slumped, sprawled, forlornly silent. What to do. Tony, maybe to save the situation, turned to me and said, "What I would want for my sculpture is to emphasize its density, its materiality." This remark provoked from me what seemed, at the moment, an amused if not facetious response: "Well, Tony, what I would like in my painting is simply a spray of color that hangs like a cloud, but does not lose its shape."

Fortunately my remark got a laugh from the students and they began to talk, telling us what art is really about. All in all a successful afternoon.

This "spray of color": I had in fact a year before tried using spray cans, the kind one buys at a hardware store, but the paintings didn't work, or so I thought at the time. I had continued working with paint rollers, merging colors into one another. It occurred to me as I lay in bed that night after the visit to Noland's studio that a spray gun might speak

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to my vision. The color cloud suddenly appeared real, something that could be made into art. The next day I drove to the main hardware supply store in Bennington and rented a spray gun. I am apprehensive of almost anything that plugs into a wall. I am defeated by TVs and microwaves. I can handle a toaster, but short of that I fear and tremble. It turned out that the spray gun—a sinister-looking instrument—comes attached to something called a compressor, a tanklike object, sullen and alien. Later that day, in my studio in Shaftsbury, Vermont, I stapled a large canvas to the floor. I attached the spray gun to the compressor and filled the spray gun container, and held it in one hand while plugging the compressor extension cord into a wall socket. The compressor roared and advanced on me in a threatening manner. I wrenched its plug from the socket.

Clearly things were not going smoothly; however, I managed to secure the beast, and holding the gun, I slowly squeezed the trigger, recalling suddenly the Zane Grey heros of my childhood, "Son, when you go after Snake-eye Charlie, remember to take aim and just squeeze the trigger slowly."

A mist of color had spread itself on part of the canvas. It was ravishing. A new light, a new color; I was Apollo. If one gun was great, two guns, two colors—ecstasy! A world of possibilities had opened. In this manner I covered the canvas. That was about thirty-five years ago. I still use a spray gun, sometimes as a last touch, and I still feel the same excitement. Fortunately I found a spray gun that doesn't need a compressor.

That is how the spray paintings came about, lying in bed, imagining a painting. It doesn't always work. It's more frequently like this: in the bedroom darkness I may visualize a way of making a painting: I can see it—if I do this and this and that and this, my God! Why haven't I seen this until now? I can hardly wait to get to the studio and do the this and that and make the vision real. Alas, all too often, the dream turns into a mud puddle. I am left looking at a disaster. What to do? Keep working. I ask the Almighty for help. That frees me. Look at what He is able to do with a handful of dust and a rib, and here I am with all this paint and a brush and my life in my hands, and all I need is to make a good work of art; I get back to work.

Several years ago I was asked to give a talk about color and color theory, about which I'm supposed to know much, having been one of the Color Field artists. Well, I told the truth. I said, "I don't know a damn thing about color," meaning I have no theory about color. I've read some theories by very knowledgeable people, but they did not penetrate, because they were not useful to me. I work intuitively. I need to

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surprise myself. Let's see what happens if I do such and such. And squeeze a yellow glaze on top of it? In other words, like most artists, I try things out. I'm always impressed by Matisse and his "Notes of a Painter." His way with color is: he puts down a red, he puts down a green, something tells him that the red needs more red. He expands the red. He puts down another color. He composes. To see a painting come alive and turn beautiful doesn't have a lot to do with theories. Theories come after the fact, after the creation. When an artist dallies with theory to explain or describe his art, my hunch is he does it to allay his fears, to comfort himself. (Clement Greenberg once said an artist can become frightened by his own originality.) Theorizing about art is not useful. An artist I know tells me his theory of color. Black and white are not colors. Blue is a color, orange, yellow, red—all colors. Black and white—not colors. "So Manet didn't know what he was doing?" I say. "It would be better if he had not used black and white." My friend should be institutionalized. "*Stupide comme un artiste*," the French say.

A work of art begins with a vision. . .first the vision, then the means to make the vision real. Consider Dr. Frankenstein, a failed sculptor you might say; but he did have a vision and having a vision he found the means, which lay near at hand in the graveyard. He needed fresh corpses, the way an impressionist needed a motif, the way Rubens needed a model with a "Rubens-like" posterior. Passion is involved. Recall that moment in the film when the creature's eyelids flutter, its finger moves, and Dr. Frankenstein, near swooning, trills, "It's alive," and then "It's alive!" That is the beginning and the be-all of creating life; but to lift us up a work of art, of high art, must be beautiful too. There lies the failure of Dr. Frankenstein and it breaks his heart. He has created a hapless monster with the brain of a criminal. He has let loose a bad work of art within the community and much unhappiness. Poor man, depressed by failure, he gives up creating and finally, finally seeks solace in the arms of his beautiful and long-waiting virginal beloved. All artists must sympathize with Dr. Frankenstein. He's one of us. Now, Dracula, he's to be shunned. Dreadful fellow, unredeemable, disgusting, and blood sucking. I saw the film when it first came out. I couldn't have been more than six years old. I stayed in bed for days, face to the wall, paralyzed.

Isaac Bashevis Singer in his novel *The Penitent* has a character saying he does not believe in chance or coincidence: "Coincidence is not a kosher word." So, is there a plan, a pattern, a meaning? Unlikely things do happen, making sculpture in St. Neots, for example. Once again Tony Caro was the instrument. I was on my way to the south of France

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for a vacation. I had stopped in London for a couple of days, a week at most, to see Tony. He urged me to stay in London for several weeks. "Use my studio. Paint, make sculpture if you like." I am the least tidy of painters, so the notion of destroying the studio of a dear friend was not to be countenanced. Nor could I see myself making sculpture in his studio. But make sculpture! Yes, I could see myself doing that, and suddenly I had to make sculpture. Sculpture began pouring out of me in the shape of drawings on scraps of paper, on yellow pads, dozens and dozens of drawings. And just as suddenly I knew how they were to be made. I would need a huge space. Tony helped me find an unused factory in the midlands of an ancient town—it looked ancient to me—named St. Neots. A man named Sam Carruth (not his real name) owned the factory and he provided a cottage where I would live and he would get all the materials I needed and a motorbike which I could use to get to the factory several miles away. The motorbike broke down almost immediately, but Sam loaned me his bicycle. Good Sam. He was a bit of a shyster, but thanks to him I made my sculptures. I'm grateful.

I asked Sam to get me sheets of aluminum, their surfaces anodized in various colors. These sheets were to have a variety of thicknesses, widths, heights, lengths, and a variety of shapes, curved and flat, corrugated and so forth, even a huge aluminum cone-shaped object which he somehow managed to steal from the British Air Force, or so he said. While Sam was gathering all the material I joined Larry Rubin and John Kasmin on the French Riviera and waited. Finally all was ready. I flew to London and drove to St. Neots, which is not far from Cambridge. I was terrified. Sculpture does that. It's not flat. Facing an empty canvas is scary enough but it is flat. Daring to make art, high art is a humbling thing to try. I don't know any sane, sensible, so-called well-adjusted artists. (Art therapists, take notice; you practice a dangerous profession.) It does feel like a death for an artist when his picture dies.

For myself, I've never destroyed a painting. I paint over it. It becomes a new painting; if it dies again, I paint over it. Some of my paintings have become very heavy.

Why had I chosen aluminum to work with? It's light, I could move it around, juxtapose shapes, compose by myself, choose from the many shapes I had ordered and were now awaiting me, piled against the walls. I tend to work at night, all night. Sam Carruth had hired three metal workers to assist me in the things I don't do, like welding, and naturally they work by day, which was fine by me. I don't like people around when I'm working. They're in my way. For many years I had a cat named Cara who was okay in my studio. I always felt that cat knew something,

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wanted to tell me that special something that could help me while I was painting, but all Cara ever did was nudge my hand and make opera-like sounds.

It was a week before I had the courage to go to the factory. It was late at night and I stood looking at all that aluminum and wished myself somewhere else. But once I began moving shapes around, sculptures began to appear and I took heart. When the workers Sam had hired arrived in the morning around ten I was done working and could tell them where I wanted them to weld the shapes. But they had to have their tea, so it was closer to eleven before they would stir themselves. I began to love those guys. What a time I had. They too. They became very involved in the sculptures, even began to fancy themselves sculptors. When I'd come to the factory to begin my night's work, I'd see some of my aluminum put together into sculptures they had made. I was not amused.

I wanted to paint the sculptures in such a way as to appear to follow the shape of the various elements. Goodness! Sounds like a theory. Anyway, I felt I had to do it. I painted the sculptures, using car enamels and my dear old spray gun, which I'd had shipped over from the States. What excitement. I ended up with close to thirty sculptures. I spent about five months working in St. Neots. I was not without occasional company. Some of the sculptors and painters living in London would drive out to see what I was up to and were generous in their comments. A New York sculptor came by once. Not so generous.

One day Henry Geldzahler arrived. "I heard you were making sculpture in St. Neots." Henry was the curator of contemporary art at the Metropolitan Museum. He stayed a few hours, admiring the sculpture, and as he was leaving, said, "How would you feel about showing these at the Met?"

"I would feel very good about showing these at the Met. Are you kidding?"

"I'm serious. There is one problem. The Met has a rule that forbids showing living artists' work, but I'll call the board together and persuade them to change the rule."

"Good luck," I said and forgot about it. The rule change was most unlikely, or so it seemed. But they did change the rule and I showed five large sculptures which Clem Greenberg helped me choose. I thought the show was wonderful; some critics thought otherwise. "The worst painter in America is showing the worst sculpture being made," one wrathful critic trumpeted. Wow! Record crowds came to see.

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Anton Chekhov, in a letter, said, "Having read over the years a thousand reviews of my plays, I never read one single sentence that was any use to me."

If indeed fate, or something, prods the direction my work is to take, it's the exception, not the general practice. Most of the time I go to my studio and just begin. Something, a sentence I've read can get me going. "Do the thing and you will have the power." It's in Emerson's essay "Compensation." It's addressed to farmers: sow, plow, reap. It's a gem of a sentence for artists. An artist's studio is a marvelous situation. It's where an artist can be by himself, truly himself, to sing, dance, paint, pray, and play. I have to pray standing up. . .getting old in the knees.

"Do the thing and you will have the power." I say it to myself. It's freeing. It works. Later, an artist looks at his work and asks himself, and anyone who happens to be there, "Does it work?" What does it mean, "Does it work?" We know what it means. Someone says, "I think it would work if you took an inch off the top." Another remonstrates, "Don't touch it. I don't believe in cropping." Someone shouts, "If it makes the painting more realized, he'd damn well better take off an inch!" When a painting "works," it looks as if it had to be; otherwise it's merely art.

Looking at great art helps. It gives me pleasure. I go to museums for pleasure. In New York, the Met and the Frick are pleasure givers. How can I look at a Tintoretto, a Titian, a Rembrandt, a pastel by Manet, quite small of a young woman in profile, a pink rose in her hat, and not want to rush home to paint? The Manet was at the Guggenheim in one of those side galleries where one can see Impressionists, if motorcycles and fashion are not one's cup of tea. For the most part I stay away from what is to be seen at most of the galleries. There are exceptions: that extraordinary show of Cézanne's watercolors at Aquavella, a first-rate Marin show at the Richard York gallery, and that beautiful, beautiful "Rembrandt and the Venetians" at Salander-O'Reilly. But for the most part art is not to be seen in most New York galleries, unless a political sign lifts you up and takes you to paradise. Feces are in. Lots of shock, lots of schlock not only in the galleries, it's all over the place. Jacques Barzun calls it an "age of decadence." It's worse. The level is that of a Roman circus. Darwin was mistaken. The Neanderthals never went away. They began to paint. This started about twenty or thirty years ago, led on by Duchamp and a handful of French and American philosophers writing in a language neither French nor English, and encouraged by the radical spawn of the sixties, now tenured professors of art in our most elite universities, by journalists pretending to be art

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critics (there are exceptions; some of my best friends are critics), and what can one say about our art curators and art directors in the museums? When Philippe de Montebello, the director at the Met, having seen the "Sensation" show at the Brooklyn Museum, said, "The Emperor has no clothes," he was savaged, and particularly so by museum directors. Poor fellow. He believes a museum should be a repository for high art, for the best. Low is in. It's cool. It swaggers, it's popular, the level is rap.

"Excellence," "beautiful," "quality" are dirty words. One has to watch one's step if not to be labelled a capitalist, imperialist, fascist, or maybe worst of all, a monogamist! On the other hand, it's a wonderful situation for creating art. Creative energy can thrive when there is a culture to go up against. Manet and Cézanne and Degas and Monet and dozens of others are examples. I can hear a despairing artist, one who can't get his work seen, or sold, saying, "Yeah, easy to say. What do I do at three o'clock in the morning? What's the point?" I say, "Were you asked to be an artist? No one asked." In the face of our present culture, I say to myself, "Expect nothing. Do your work. Celebrate!"

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CYNTHIA SIMMONS

Urbicide and the Myth of Sarajevo

At the end of the twentieth century, the economic and technological interconnectedness of the world has given rise to the concept of the "global village." Yet, at the same time, the fall of communism and the growing recognition of the rights of individuals and the smaller spheres with which they identify have resulted in new nations and increasing nationalism. Such conflicting forces of unification and disintegration have been analyzed for some time with respect to the Balkan Peninsula, an early testing ground for the prospects of the "global village." The negative connotation of "balkanization" conflicts with examples of interethnic harmony in the region and with the promotion of the latter that underlay Tito's call in Yugoslavia for "brotherhood and unity." Historically, the reality of relations among the diverse peoples of the Balkans is obviously more complex. If we attempt any generalization, it would most likely describe neither a state of separation and enmity (balkanization) nor a condition of "brotherhood and unity." Research from the interwar period suggests that for centuries the inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula lived generally peacefully, in "brotherhood" if you will, but in *dis*unity.

The modern stereotype of age-old Balkan hatreds is a post–World War I invention. In his 1934 article, "L'Unité balkanique," in *Revue internationale des Études balkanique*, Jacques Ancel wrote: "An unfortunate and inappropriate expression was created at the end of the war, the 'balkanization' of Central Europe, as if the creation of new nations issuing from the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman monster empires were an imitation of Balkan civilization—a model of dissension and wars." His and others' careful study of the history of the Balkan Peninsula as a geopolitical entity revealed a territory of isolated "cells" of disparate populations. Small groups separated by the rugged terrain formed small, well-functioning (if patriarchal) units of government—"the city was a country." Ancel and his colleagues concluded that the major source of dissension in the Balkans has been the invasion of the "Great Powers," and more important, the wane of their influence, which initiated a struggle for land and power in the region. In modern

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Yugoslavia, Tito did not encourage the dissemination of such an understanding, for the knowledge that primarily ethnically pure enclaves in the Balkans functioned peacefully might imply that multiethnic communities (or states!) were doomed to failure.

Current scholarship in the West is replete with information on Great Power invasions into the Western Balkans. Bosnian scholars are engaging in this endeavor as well. Their rationale, it would seem, is to chronicle the (often tragic) repercussions of foreign invasion, rule, and representation, as well as the resilience of the Bosnian people in times of crisis. In addition to contemporary historical investigations, such as *Princ palikuca u Sarajevu* (*Prince Incendiary in Sarajevo*), Fadil Ademovic's history of the Habsburg invasion of Sarajevo in 1697, led by Eugene of Savoy, Bosnian publishing houses are reprinting relevant, but often forgotten, works. For example, in *Memoari sa Balkana 1858–1878* (*Memoirs from the Balkans*), the Bosnian Croatian Catholic, yet Ottoman bureaucrat, Martin Djurdjevic chronicles the clash between Ottoman rule and what he terms the "anti-systematic mentality" of the Bosnian Muslims.

If early on it was tradesmen who initiated contact between settlements in the Balkans, in recent history, and as a result of events among the Great Powers, Balkan communities have borne the effects of numerous *migrations*. These movements of large numbers of people have given rise to relatively new social and political entities—multiethnic villages and cities. The relatively peaceful disunity of the Balkans evolved into a potentially fractious "melting pot." For those who celebrated harmony among the various ethnicities, particular locales served as emblems of this ideal. Yugoslavs hailed the capital of Bosnia, Sarajevo, as such a place.

The war (1992–1995) destroyed Sarajevo, the city, as well as trust among the majority of Sarajevo's ethnic Muslims, Croats, Serbs, and Jews. Survivors and specialists have reexamined the "myth" of Sarajevo as a haven of interethnic peaceful coexistence. Early on in the war the writer Dzevad Karahasan reaffirmed the myth. He suggested that Sarajevo was under attack by more than Bosnian Serbs, and predictably so. In "Sarajevo, Portrait of an Internal City," he offered a structural analysis of Sarajevo as a seemingly internal city—situated in a valley surrounded by mountains and unto itself. Yet he claims that Sarajevo, with the singular exception of Jerusalem, is actually the most open and external city in Europe. The neighborhoods, or *mahalas*, that radiate from the center, or marketplace (*carsija*), like spokes from a wheel, although closed religiously and ethnically homogeneous, open out to the center,

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where all cultures and religions meet, trade, discourse, and intermarry. It is the center or hub of Sarajevo that best represents the city. Although structurally surrounded, the center is in spirit and essence open and external. Karahasan predicted that the internal (nationalistic) cities of Western Europe, feeling threatened by Sarajevo's (and Jerusalem's) cultural pluralism, would not only not defend the city, but would contribute to its demise. Published in 1993, the book proved prophetic.

Others pondering the siege of Sarajevo interpreted events as a general assault on the concept of "city." For the Serbian architect Bogdan Bogdanovic, for example, Sarajevo and Jerusalem are not exceptional cities; rather, they are the very embodiment of the ideal. In response to the attacks on Bosnian and Croatian cities during the war, he wrote: "The horror felt by the West is understandable: for centuries it has linked the concepts 'city' and 'civilization,' associating them even on an etymological level. It therefore has no choice but to view the destruction of cities as flagrant, wanton opposition to the highest values of civilization." Bogdanovic's plea is oriented beyond the war in Bosnia: "Defending the city is the only valid moral paradigm for the future. It is a light that even the most humanitarian of humans—as much understanding as they may have for the rift between nature and man and the plight of endangered flora and fauna—are as yet unable to see, unable to understand."

The work of sociologist Adam B. Seligman supports this concept of the city as being by nature pluralistic and "civilized." He identifies trust as one of the values of civilization engendered in the city. Seligman sees the growth of trust as a basic social relation as a modern phenomenon related to increased urbanization. The relationship of the city to the values of civilization (or civil society) and the growth or preservation of trust explains, in part, the threat that Sarajevo, especially, represented. To some, just by its being a city Sarajevo realized its mythic reputation for tolerance and respect of difference.

We can proffer ample evidence in the Bosnian War of urbicide as an assault on the values of civilization—the targeted destruction of cultural monuments (such as mosques and churches) and, in Sarajevo, of the National and University Library, where not only monuments to Muslim culture were preserved, but also records of Muslim political administration over Bosnia. The assault was verbal as well. In nationalist rhetoric, such as the 1992 "Warning," signed by officials of Milosevic's Serbian Socialist Party, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, urbanization is maligned for its effect on falling birth rates and migrations of populations. Such rhetoric could draw upon research, in fact, and it did not necessarily emanate from the Serb

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nationalist position. In his 1990 book, *Demografska crna jama: Nova zamka industrijskog drustva* (*The Demographic Black Hole: The New Trap of Industrialized Society*), published in Sarajevo, Ilijas Bosnjovic warns that industrialization leads to migrations to cities and consequent lower birth rates among the most educated and "progressive" of the world's inhabitants. "Civilization" carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. Ironically, the migrations that created the character of Sarajevo, and which nationalists perceive as a threat to ethnic purity, are now considered, by native Sarajevans themselves, in reaction to the massive influx of refugees from the war, to be a threat to the city's cosmopolitan culture.

During the Yugoslav wars of succession, hatred of the city as a concept and the urge to destroy it (urbicide) were real. However, the myth of Sarajevo as a center of multiethnic harmony, as expressed in Karahasan's "Portrait," has been challenged. Karahasan chose to identify Sarajevo in terms of its multicultural center. Yet he described the ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods on the periphery. Even in Sarajevo, there existed de facto segregation or isolation of ethnicities. If such were the case in Sarajevo, it was only more characteristic of the countryside.

In her important study of a central Bosnian village, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* (1995), Tone Bringa makes numerous observations concerning the shared and separate lives of the village's inhabitants, as well as the ways in which they themselves perceived their similarities and differences. She describes a society where members of the two ethnoreligious groups, Muslims and Catholics, socialize and help each other celebrate life's important passages. Yet intermarriage was rare—such an intent might well be opposed by the young people's families, the women in the family citing the difficulty of melding the traditions of food preparation and religious feasts. At the same time, Bringa reports on relatively rapid changes in the community. Within the preceding thirty years, the institution of the joint family household had waned to the point that newlyweds were likely to spend little time living with the husband's family—perhaps only to wait until the completion of their own home. On trips to the city, young women had ceased to wear the trousers, *dimije*, that were associated with village life. If we compare this description of village life with Karahaşan's portrait of Sarajevo, and we keep in mind the rapid urbanization of postwar Yugoslavia, we might recognize, rather than a sharp distinction between rural and urban life in Bosnia, a continuum from the age-old disparate "cells" of the Balkans to a more authentic multicultural existence in the hub of Sarajevo. Such

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a view calls into question, again, the reality of multiculturalism in Bosnia, even in its cosmopolitan capital of Sarajevo.

Bringa notes another changing custom in the Bosnian village that relates to the question of why Sarajevo was singled out for destruction. Mention has already been made of the firebombing of the National and University Library and the obvious attempt to destroy documents and artifacts of Bosnian Muslim culture. However, some Bosnian intellectuals, such as Gojko Beric, consider the siege an assault by Serbian "peasants" (or in the case of the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, by a Montenegran "peasant") on the high culture of Sarajevo that remained outside their reach (Beric asserts that Karadzic, a psychiatrist practicing in Sarajevo, was never accepted by the city's intellectual elite). Bringa observed that in village life, those with a modern outlook considered "Muslim" customs primitive or "of the village." Thus, although everyone in the village had previously eaten on the floor from a single pot, inhabitants of the newer neighborhoods now all ate at the table. Catholics considered the old practice a Muslim one, but everyone who now ate at the table viewed the custom as more urban or modern. If in Yugoslavia Muslims were (erroneously) associated with the village and the "primitive," Sarajevo must have represented to the provincial mind a double affront—a cosmopolitan and seemingly exclusionary center where the majority of citizens were both "modern" and (ethnically) Muslim.

Like Karahasan, other writers have pondered the reality of multiethnic integration in Sarajevo and beyond. In his essay "The Intellectual and the Creative Conscience of the Writer" (*Forgotten Country 2: War Prose in Bosnia-Hercegovina*, 1997), the Sarajevan writer Mirko Marjanovic observes that multiculturalism in the region can succeed only on the foundation of a *genuine* mutual understanding and experience of cultural differences among all citizens. He speaks of the *writer's* need to experience cultural differences among all citizens, for the artistic community can serve as a progressive force for change: "The writer must know well all the organisms, culture, religion, ethnos, history above all, everything that is in common and what is not, to make the body and himself healthy and his intellectual and creative conscience." Experience in Sarajevo and the rest of ex-Yugoslavia has shown, of course, that the experience of other cultures that Marjanovic recommends for writers should be the goal of everyone in multiethnic communities.

While examining the reality of multiculturalism in Sarajevo, we should also consider the long-range historical experience of various ethnicities. Despite the recent catastrophe, and a similar besieging and

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destruction of the city by the Habsburg forces in 1697, Sarajevans of various races and religions (Muslim, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and Jewish) have shared a community for more than four hundred years. Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain in the late fifteenth century found a safe haven in Sarajevo. The Sephardic Jews settled in Bosnia in Sarajevo, and in other towns in the Balkans, because the Ottoman Empire did not have an official policy of discrimination. Yet they did not have equal status. Dr. Moritz Levy, in his *Sefardi u Bosni* (*The Sephardim in Bosnia*), republished and translated from the German in its entirety in Sarajevo in 1996, details the taxes levied on the Jews (as well as the Christians) and various prohibitions. For example, according to a law of 1714, Jews and Christians were not permitted to dress in the same fashion as Muslims. Most important, there were no laws to protect the rights of non-Muslims. More recently, Robert Donia has compared the processes by which Sarajevo Council members were chosen in 1878, 1919–1920, and 1945. In all cases entry into the council was determined by ethnicity, even if, with time, class membership became a more salient feature for these leaders than ethnicity. Such reminders or revelations should not serve as a "list of grievances," as horrific events of World War II were recalled these last two decades to incite nationalism. Information on the realities of life for the various ethnicities before the era of modern Yugoslavia can prove useful in assessing genuine integration. The ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods of Sarajevo speak to a long past where the periphery of the city characterized it to an equal or even greater extent than its multicultural center.

In the Bosnian War, urbicide was the dominant force. Since the war, the "idea" of Sarajevo has undergone serious scrutiny. It turned out to be more fragile than imagined. Yet it has not died. Traditional events from before the war (Sarajevo Winter, Bascarsjia Nights, the Sarajevo Film Festival) are being held again, along with some new ones. For the past two years at the New Year, in addition to the traditional interreligious celebration by heads of the various faiths in the Catholic Cathedral, Sarajevans have celebrated in the streets. Most have hailed the renewal of traditional sporting and cultural events and the organization of new ones. Research shows, however, that the (re-)building of a multicultural Sarajevo requires more fundamental acts of (re-)integration.

Perhaps primary to the creation of a multicultural community is the building of trust. The sociologist Thomas Cushman has investigated the reestablishment of trust in Bosnia, based on the results of interviews he conducted in Sarajevo in the summer of 1998 (published in *Forum*

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Bosne, 1999). He found that people at that time trusted their neighbors (even in multiethnic neighborhoods), although they trusted no institutions, religious organizations, or governments (except, then, the United States government), even though church leaders had begun to take leadership roles in attempts at peace and reconciliation. Even in an atmosphere of distrust, however, he found gradations of that rare sentiment. The more (successful, nonthreatening) contacts an individual had with other people, the more trust would develop. This supports the position espoused by sociologists, such as Seligman, that trust grows in cities—people forge allegiances by class rather than by race or ethnicity, and this is the basis for cosmopolitanism.

Cushman reports also on an unforeseen result of his interviews. They were in fact group encounters—representatives of the various ethnicities came together to respond to a set of questions. As it turned out, many of the respondents had their first chance since the war to speak to the "other." Rather than simply answer questions, they attempted to explain their grievances and to express their grief. Although not the original intent of the sociological research, these contact sessions contributed in and of themselves to the painfully slow process of reconciliation. What is needed to rebuild understanding and trust, as the writer Mirko Marjanovic noted, is real, frequent, and close contact among the diverse cultures.

When this writer questioned a Sarajevan intellectual after the war about how she envisioned the future in Bosnia, she replied that before Sarajevans and Bosnians can look forward, they first need to find out what really happened and who they really were. The idea that Sarajevo could be equated to its multicultural center may have been only a myth, but it is still an ideal worth striving for. The ever-shrinking world must choose *true* multiculturalism (a real knowledge of and respect for various cultures) and the city as its embodiment in order to avoid the chaos of nationalism and the periphery. There are signs that Sarajevo, in confronting that choice, will eventually realize the myth that has characterized the city for four hundred years. Scholars and other professionals are initiating a process of self-discovery—what existed in Sarajevo, in fact, that has been destroyed? Equally important, the recreation of a social and economic infrastructure will provide opportunities for communication, for building or rebuilding trust, and, finally, genuine integration. We can only hope that "Great Powers" can exert a rare salutary influence on this fragile and lengthy process.

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PALLE YOURGRAU

Was Simone Weil a Jew?

> "Wasn't Jacob's struggle with the angel the main taint: 'He fought with an angel and won, and the latter cried for mercy. . . .' Isn't it a misfortune when one struggles with God, not to be defeated?"
>
> Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*

THE ONLY WAY TO LEAVE the mafia, it is sometimes said, is feet first. It is not so easy, however, to cease being a Jew. Over half a century ago, Simone Weil, a refugee from Nazi-occupied France, died in London at the age of thirty-four from tuberculosis, its effects hastened by her self-starvation in sympathy with her French compatriots. Jewish by birth, Weil spent much of her brief life attempting to construct a Platonized Christian mysticism. Along the way, undeterred by the Nazi persecution of Jews, she launched a series of harrowing critiques of Judaism. Even her death, however, has not released her from being identified as a member of a "club one does not quit": she is still almost universally characterized as being "essentially a Jew," albeit of the worst kind, a "self-hating, assimilationist Jew" who "abandoned her own people" at the time of their greatest need.

A philosopher by training—she attended the École Normale Supérieure, where she encountered Simone de Beauvoir—Weil abandoned her privileged role as a (highly unorthodox and charismatic) teacher to become, among other things, a day laborer at a Renault factory, a toiler in the harsh fields of France and the vineyards of Marxism, and a volunteer against the fascist Franco in the Spanish Civil War—a series of physically and spiritually demanding tasks exacerbated by bodily frailty and nightmarish, debilitating attacks of migraine. ("I envied her," wrote de Beauvoir, "for having a heart that could beat across the world.") Recovering in Italy from a painful accident during the Civil War, she had an epiphany in a small chapel where St. Francis himself had had a similar revelation and spent most of the rest of her life in an attempt to unite her beloved Plato with the Christian Gospels. Her crowning achievement is a collection of epigrams or aperçus—published

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posthumously—entitled *Gravity and Grace*. ("Gravity makes things come down, wings make them rise. [But] what wings raised to the second power can make things come down without weight? . . .Heaven coming down to earth lifts earth to heaven.")

Weil's reputation as one of the great spirits, one of the great philosophers, of the twentieth century continues to grow, albeit more on the fringes of academe than in the main groves. Among her champions is T. S. Eliot. What also grows unabated, however, is the "scandal" of her relationship to Judaism. Given that the question itself of what it is to be a Jew remains in the forefront not only of Jewish philosophy and theology but, since the birth of Israel, of geopolitics and national sovereignty as well, the issue of how to assess Weil's shocking critique of Judaism is a pressing one. Yet the discussion has been one sided in the extreme: her critics see here only an ugly prejudice, while her admirers retreat to an embarrassed silence. The question, however, cannot be avoided: what are we to make of Simone Weil's unhappy relationship to Judaism?

To begin with, Weil was not preoccupied with attempting to deny her family history, though she did express skepticism about our ability to make sense of racial categories. She was especially concerned to deny the *importance* of racial categorization. For whom, however, are such considerations a matter of overwhelming importance? When the anti-Semite looks at Weil, he sees only a Jew, much as the misogynist sees only a woman. Yet there are radical feminists who, in company with the misogynist, would also see in Weil only a woman. Weil, however, was as resentful of being typecast as a ("mere") woman as of being a Jew. Asked once to lead a discussion on feminism, she lashed out, "I am not a feminist!" Earlier, she had acquired the habit of signing her letters to her mother, "Your son." Later, she aroused indignation with her penchant for wearing men's clothes (as did her great predecessor, Joan of Arc). Her unrelenting iconoclasm, her fierce rebellion against any conceivable stereotype that sought to tame and limit her, earned her the nicknames "monstrum horrendum," "the Martian," "the Red Virgin," and "a combination anarchist and sky pilot"!

Weil was particularly angered by the tendency of some Jews to see only what the anti-Semite saw when he looked at her—namely, a Jew. But was Simone Weil a Jew? For her own answer to this question one turns naturally to a letter she wrote in 1940 to the Minister of Education of the Vichy Government in response to the new racial statutes, entitled, "What is a Jew?": "I do not know the definition of the word, 'Jew';" she wrote, "that subject was not included in my education. The Statute, it is true, defines a Jew as 'a person who has three or

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more Jewish grandparents.' But this simply carries the difficulty two generations back." She continues: "Does this word designate a religion? I have never been in a synagogue, and have never witnessed a Jewish religious ceremony. . . ." "But perhaps," she went on, "the word designates a race? In that case, I have no reason to believe that I have any link to the people who inhabited Palestine two thousand years ago." "If there is a religious tradition," she concluded, "which I regard as my patrimony, it is the Catholic tradition. In short, mine is the Christian, French, Greek, tradition."

Now, is Weil to be praised or condemned for writing such a letter? Was it simply a cowardly attempt to let other Jews die in her place? Everything in her life—a life in which personal, physical courage was carried almost to the point of insanity—testifies against this interpretation. Her letter points, rather, to her steadfast refusal, in the very face of the Holocaust, to let anyone—including the Nazis—dictate to her a racial self-identification she herself rejected. The philosopher Karl Popper reacted similarly, but many who had long since been "assimilated"—who had long since ceased identifying themselves as Jews—made an about-face at the advent of the Nazis, choosing now to adopt the identity foisted on them by their worst enemies. Albert Einstein, arguably, should be counted among this multitude. So should Hannah Arendt. As Courtine-Denamy writes (*Three Women in Dark Times: Edith Stein, Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil*) : "[Hannah Arendt] attached no importance to the fact [that she was Jewish] until Hitler's persecutions endangered German Jewry. At that point she became truly Jewish, adopting a motto of Pindar's that Nietzsche cites: 'Become what you are.'" Would it not be more accurate, however, to say that Arendt's motto was: "Become what the Nazis say you are"? Is Weil really to be condemned for declining to adopt such a motto?

Now one would think that Weil's letter, however one may assess it, is clear enough. Yet even T. S. Eliot, an admirer, has no difficulty in writing: "Simone Weil was three things in the highest degree: French, Jewish [!], and Christian." Alfred Kazin writes of her in the *New York Review of Books*: "She was Jewish, and looked it [!]. . .[but] despised herself for being a Jew. . .'Assimilation' never saw a Jew more eager to deny herself. . . .She called herself a Christian but. . .in her Jewish excess of zeal [showed that]. . .she was truly of 'immoderate Jewish temperament.'" Mr. Kazin, it seems, would have been less disturbed if Weil had not "looked Jewish." But he is far from alone. Thomas Nevin also marginalized her in *Simone Weil: Portrait of a Self-Exiled Jew*. As Diogenes Allen and Eric Springsted have written: "Weil is marginalized [by

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Nevin] by being treated as [mere] woman, sickly, and finally as Jew. In Nevin's presentation Weil apparently was merely trying to 'pass' as a Christian. . .[Indeed] she had, he suggests, 'an *anima naturaliter judaica*'. . .'a natural Jewish soul' [!]. . .To be a Jew [for Nevin]. . .is to belong to 'a club one does not quit'. . . ."

Rachel Brenner, in turn, in *Writing as Resistance: Four Women Against the Holocaust*, pits Weil against another famous "Jewish-Christian," Edith Stein, whose recent canonization by the Catholic Church has been the source of much controversy. Stein, who grew up in an orthodox Jewish family, converted in her twenties, became a Carmelite nun, and ended up being gassed at Auschwitz. "In contrast to Stein's specific mention of Jewishness," Brenner writes, "Weil entitled the autobiographical letter she wrote to Father Perrin as a '*Spiritual* Autobiography'. . . .Was [this] emphasis on the spiritual an indication of her intention to eliminate the fact of her Jewish birth?" Indeed, if Brenner is to be believed. Weil, as Brenner would have it, "denied her Jewish identity," "desired to obliterate her Jewishness," due to her "inability to accept herself as a Jew" and to her search for "deliverance from the burden of Jewishness"! (It is a mystery how anyone could speak of Weil's desire to be "relieved of burdens.")

With Brenner's comments we come to the heart of the matter. Weil was concerned exclusively with the *spiritual*. This is what led her to fall in love with Plato and the Christian Gospels, but it is also what alienated her from what she saw as the temporal, this-worldly, "collective" or racial, element in Judaism. (It also inspired her to unloose not a few poisoned arrows in the direction of the Catholic Church, which she never did join.) The hair-raising stories of the fearfully powerful God of Moses and the Passover, the God of Joshua, horrified Weil, and led her to deny that the God who inspired (or gave) the Sermon on the Mount could be consanguine with a God who could perform or condone such acts on behalf of his "chosen people." For instance, in *Deuteronomy* 20: 16–17: "Of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you." Weil's reaction to such passages, in which the Lord appears to order his "chosen people" to slaughter their enemies, is outrage: "The Hebrews took as their idol, not something made of metal or wood, but a race, a nation, something just as earthly. Their religion is essentially inseparable from. . .idolatry, because of the notion of the 'chosen people.'"

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These are shocking words, but they need to be seriously assessed, not dismissed as mere symptoms of prejudice. The crucial question surely is what is *meant* by "the chosen people." Here Weil would indeed appear to have neglected the nuanced interpretations of the rabbinic tradition. Would it not, then, be equally [un]fair, along these lines, if Weil were to hurl the accusation of idolatry at the Christian tradition, which, after all, worships a *man*, neglecting, thereby, all the nuances that the New Testament brings to bear on this fundamental aspect of the Christian faith? Christians, it would seem, cannot avoid the task of defending their religion against the charge of idolatry. As Eric D'Arcy writes in "Worthy of Worship: A Catholic Contribution": "At the heart of Christology is the problem, How can Jesus of Nazareth be at the same time literally divine and literally human?" By the same token, Jews, for Weil, cannot sidestep the task of "defending" the notion of "the chosen people." This, indeed, is what David Novak does in his classic study *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People*.

Clearly, Weil permitted the elements of the Jewish tradition that offended her to overshadow other, fundamental aspects of the religion, from the Law of Moses to the Psalms and the Prophets. A comprehensive study of Weil's relationship to Judaism would have to account for this. Yet it is surely important to draw attention, as Weil has, to the apparent *dissonance* between those elements of the faith just cited (which Weil herself admired), which point to the genius of the Hebrew Bible in bringing forth the *spiritual* values represented by the one transcendent God—"This is the word of the Lord. . .not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit. . . ," says the prophet Zechariah—and the more troubling aspects.

But are the dissonances Weil draws attention to real or only apparent? However one chooses to answer this question, it should be clear that it is nothing short of perverse to characterize someone who set herself—rightly or wrongly—*against* what she saw as a "collective," racial element in the Hebrew Bible as an anti-Semite, i.e., as the worst kind of *racist*. As against this, there are those who would remind us that Weil herself at one point appeared to accept the label of anti-Semite. Her friend and biographer, Simone Petrement, however, puts the matter in context: "About 1934, she said one day to Bercher, as a joke, 'Personally, I am an anti-Semite.' They had discussed it later and she agreed that she was not really an anti-Semite and that the Jews she disliked were those who regarded themselves as Jews before all else and so separated themselves from other men. In short, what she disapproved of in Judaism was what could possibly lead to sectarianism or fanaticism."

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A different impression, however, is created by another of her friends, Gustav Thibon, who declares outright that she was an anti-Semite: "No doubt [Weil] owed this hardness of green fruit. . .to her racial origin; she was indeed the daughter of. . .that 'stiff-necked' people whom the prophets sought to unbend—and her passionate anti-Semitism is the most striking evidence of her descent [!]. Is there anything more Jewish [!] than the. . .feverish search for eternity in the time order wherein we can recognize in the noblest representatives of this chosen and rebellious race[!] the ancient impatience for the Promised Land and a temporal kingdom?" (*Simone Weil As We Knew Her*). This passage, however, sheds more light on Thibon's own penchant for racial stereotyping than it does on Weil's relationship to Judaism.

Pace Thibon, the basis of Weil's animadversions toward Judaism is not her being "the daughter of that 'stiff-necked' people whom the prophets sought to unbend," but rather her horror of "the collective." "As collective, thought cannot exist as thought," she wrote in *Gravity and Grace*. Her whole life she declined solidarity with the collective, including her gender, her race, her religion, her nationality, her political cause. In Judaism, however, she thought she saw an attempt literally to "make a religion" out of the collective in the form of the "chosen people." No wonder she set her face against it. Was she mistaken? Courtine-Denamy cites approvingly Emmanuel Levinas, who writes that Weil mistakenly attributes privilege to being "the chosen," whereas being chosen in fact implies only responsibility. To Weil, however, being "chosen" implies *separation* from the unfortunate who exist outside the chosen group. As Bercher said, "the Jews she disliked were those who regarded themselves as Jews before all else and so separated themselves from other men."

Weil's horror of the separation implied by "the collective" extended to the Catholic Church. As she wrote in "Hesitations Concerning Baptism": "Nothing gives me more pain than the idea of separating myself from the immense and unfortunate multitude of unbelievers." Indeed, "she reproached [the Catholic Church]," wrote Thibon, "for being at the same time a social and totalitarian organism, modeled on imperial Rome. . . .Her conscience rebelled against a spiritual power which proclaimed that there was no salvation outside the Church and which anathematized those who rejected its authority. How many times did she not tell me that Catholic totalitarianism was, in a sense, infinitely worse than that of men like Hitler or Stalin, since it condemned all refractory spirits to eternal torture whereas the tyranny of the dictators did at least cease on death."

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For an authentic example of anti-Semitism we need only turn to Wittgenstein, another "assimilated Jew," who wrote that:

> Among Jews "genius" is found only in the holy man. Even the greatest of Jewish thinkers is no more than talented. . . .It might be said (rightly or wrongly) that the Jewish mind does not have the power to produce even the tiniest flower or blade of grass; its way is rather to make a drawing of the flower or blade of grass that has grown in the soil of another's mind and to put it into a comprehensive picture.

Weil, by contrast, is not concerned with pronouncements about the "Jewish mind" (and its supposed limitations). What are we to make, however, of her concerns about elements of the Jewish *faith*?

Michael Wyschogrod, in his account of Jewish philosophy, *The Body of Faith: God and the People Israel*, while distancing himself from some of the great Jewish thinkers of the past, from Philo to Maimonides to Buber, addresses this question in a forceful way. David Novak, indeed, in *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People*, while harboring some reservations, writes that: "Wyschogrod's work is an important revival and it is the work of. . .one who is theologically serious and philosophically astute. It also comes closest to what I would consider to be the authentic teaching of Biblical-Rabbinic Judaism."

What is this authentic teaching? "The holy," writes Wyschogrod, "transcends the ethical; it can even contradict it. God must be obeyed whether or not his commands are in harmony with the ethical; the sacrifice of Isaac proves that point." "God," he affirms, "could have chosen a spiritual criterion: the election of all those who have faith. . . .The liberal mind would find such an election far more congenial." Further, "at the root of [the] substitution [of Ethics for authentic Judaism] is a spiritualizing heresy [!] for which the body of Israel is of very little significance." Weil, however, undisturbed by this particular "spiritualizing heresy," was deeply concerned with what she saw as the self-appointed "spiritual election" of the Catholic Church, and it played a significant role in her lifelong resistance to baptism.

Weil stands here in sharp contrast to Edith Stein, who acknowledged what might be described as a "double election"—the voluntary, spiritual election of the Catholic Church and in addition the racial bond that, she pointed out, tied her to another Jew, namely, Jesus. Should Stein really be praised, however, for announcing, in effect, her "racial solidarity" with the Messiah? If praise is due, then consistency surely demands that there never be any but Jewish Popes! It is a mystery,

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indeed, why the Church does not demand such "racial solidarity," since in denying the priesthood to women, it is in effect demanding "sexual solidarity" with Jesus.

Sadly, however, Stein continues to be pressed into service as a paradigm to measure the imperfections of Weil. In *Three Women in Dark Times*, Sylvie Courtine-Denamy, convinced that Weil showed little sympathy for the desperate fate of European Jewry, commends Stein, against Weil, as the good Jew, the good Christian. She cites the words Stein spoke to Father Hirschmann just before her death in Auschwitz: "You don't know what it means to me to be a daughter of the chosen people—to belong to Christ, not only spiritually, but according to the flesh." It is sad that these deeply moving, mortal words of so great a figure as Stein should be put into service against Weil, another victim—if a more indirect one—of the Nazis.

"Must we conclude," writes Courtine-Denamy, "that, far from having been led to her grave by an excess of compassion, as certain writers suggest, Weil had a soul that was insufficiently possessed by Christ, in contrast to Stein. . . ?" We in turn must ask Courtine-Denamy: is a Christian, Jewish by birth, who detested all racial, all collective classifications including that of being a member of "the chosen people," really to be condemned as "insufficiently possessed by Christ" for refusing to accept Hitler's decision to count her one of "the chosen"? If it can be demonstrated—as Courtine-Denamy assures us it can—that Weil did indeed fail to sympathize sufficiently with the fate of the Jews, should this not be described as a lack of compassion for humankind, rather than as an example of a Jew abandoning "her own people"?

Clearly, it is easier for Courtine-Denamy, who admires Arendt, to find a place in her scheme of things for Stein, than for Weil, who sets her teeth on edge. Stein and Arendt, for all their bravery and iconoclasm, are safe thinkers. Weil, by contrast, is a genuinely dangerous one. The "combination skydiver and anarchist" resists all attempts to domesticate her. A threat to all complacencies, she will never be your ally; as your conscience, she will defend not you but your enemy. Two incidents bring this out especially clearly. A sometime Marxist, Weil arranged for Leon Trotsky, in need of a place to stay in Paris, to spend a few nights in her apartment. Their discussions became arguments. "I see you disagree with me in almost everything," Trotsky told her. "Why do you put me up in your house? Do you belong to the Salvation Army?"

The second incident concerns Vichy. "I recognized the legitimacy of the Vichy Government," wrote her friend Thibon, "whereas Simone Weil was already a wholehearted '*résistante*'. . . .Later on, in America,

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she defended the poor 'Vichyists' against the final and unqualified anathema fulminated by certain emigrants [who chose to condemn Vichy from a safe distance]." Like Socrates and her beloved Spinoza, she was in essence an excommunicant. "I am not a person," she once said, "with whom it is advisable to link one's fate. Human beings have always more or less sensed this. . . ."

Like Brenner and Courtine-Denamy, Wyschogrod cannot forgive Weil her ("unJewish") focus on the *spiritual*, at the expense of the "body" (the people, "the body," of Israel). Judaism, by his lights, is "the election of a biological people rather than, as in Christianity, of a community of faith." It is not for us, he argues, to demand of God that he always act out of goodness. "Ethical Judaism," he writes, "[in which the good reigns supreme] is *housebroken Judaism*. . . .Ethics is the Judaism of the assimilated." Indeed, "since God created heaven and earth, he has the right to give [the land] to whomever he sees fit and to deprive one nation of it and bestow it on another." For Wyschogrod, then, we must make a choice—to accept either God or the good as the ultimate authority.

For Weil, by contrast, "the essential truth concerning God is that He is good. To believe that God can order men to commit atrocious acts of injustice and cruelty is the greatest mistake it is possible to make with regard to Him." Is it, then, one must ask, simply a *lucky accident* that God happens to be good—that the divine command coincides with the ethical? For Simone Weil, to worship a God who is not bound by the good would be to succumb to the idolatry of power. "God gives himself to men," she writes in *Gravity and Grace*, "either as powerful or as perfect—it is for them to choose."

Can we afford simply to ignore—as Brenner, Courtine-Denamy and Wyschogrod would appear to—what Weil says here? James Carroll, for one, agrees with Weil when he writes in *Constantine's Sword*, "A new Christology will banish from Christian faith. . .the inhuman idea that anyone's death can be the fulfillment of a plan of God's." Are the passages in the Hebrew Bible, then, that Wyschogrod adduces proof that Weil is simply wrong about the essential truth concerning God, or, on the contrary, is the apparent dissonance of such Biblical passages with the goodness Weil demands of God evidence of the lack of divine authority of such writings? If this is indeed the crucial question, then the crucial text must surely be Plato's dialogue *The Euthyphro*.

In this dialogue Socrates asks, "What is piety?" or more generally, "What is it to be good in the light of God?" Euthyphro answers that piety, or goodness, consists in being loved by God. To test this answer, Socrates proposed a question: does God love the good *because* it is

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good, or is the good good *because* God loves it? The Platonic answer, embraced by Weil, is that God loves the good *because* it is good. Wyschogrod, by contrast, chooses the other path: "[Jewish ethics]. . .is not the ethics of the Euthyphro of Plato." To do otherwise, for Wyschogrod, would be to place the good above God. Weil is not alone in rejecting this line. Eric D'Arcy, in "'Worthy of Worship': A Catholic Contribution," places himself firmly on the side of Weil: "God forbids certain kinds of action because they are wrong, not vice versa."

Yet Wyschogrod, too, does not stand alone. He is joined by no less a figure than Wittgenstein, who was, like Weil (and, indeed, myself), "three-fourths Jewish." Unlike Weil, however, he described himself as "one hundred per cent Hebraic," as opposed to "Greek," and maintained that it is his position here that "is the deeper one: *Good is what God orders*. For this cuts off the path to any and every explanation 'why' it is good, while the [other] conception [i.e., Plato's] is precisely the superficial, the rationalistic one."

Weil is not alone, however, in finding the texts Wyschogrod adduces troubling. The question of how to read "troubling texts" in the Hebrew Bible is of course a major issue in Jewish Biblical scholarship itself. Thus, Shaul Magid in "What is 'Troubling' About Troubling Texts?" discusses three hermeneutic approaches to the teaching of "troubling" texts from the Hebrew Bible—"troubling" either because they offend our ethical sensibilities, contradict themselves, or contradict fundamental passages elsewhere in the Bible. The approaches he outlines are: "de-Judaizing the text [i.e., arguing that it is so offensive it cannot be authentically Jewish]; allegorizing the text; and reading the text against itself."

James Carroll, too, in *Constantine's Sword*, suggests "reading the text against itself" in the case of "troubling" passages in the Gospels of the New Testament. He also points to "'troubling texts' that imbue the Jewish Scriptures with blood, from those slaughtered firstborn male children in Egypt to the Canaanites driven from Palestine." Unlike Weil, however, he places less emphasis on these than on troubling passages in the New Testament, and he protests "the inherently supersessionist terminology of 'Old' and 'New' [Testaments]."

Weil's concerns, then, about troubling texts in the Hebrew Bible cannot be dismissed out of hand as a mere symptom of prejudice. Yet the question remains: is it permitted to Weil, a Jew by birth, to resign from "the club from which one does not resign," to reject her membership as one of the "chosen" and choose instead to follow Plato and the Christian Gospels? I conclude not with an answer to this question but with a

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few quotations that point, however briefly, to how Simone Weil, Platonist, Christian, and mystic, herself conceives of God (a conception in which there can be heard echoes of Jewish mysticism).

"Supernatural love," Weil writes in *Gravity and Grace*, "has no contact with force, but at the same time it does not protect the soul against the coldness of force, the coldness of steel. . . .Armour, like the sword, is made of metal. . . .If we want to have a love that will protect the soul from wounds, we must love something other than God." She finds God reflected, as a father is reflected in the face of his son, not in what is powerful but in what is beautiful. "Beauty itself," she writes, "is the Son of God. For he is the image of the Father, and the beautiful is the image of the good."

Of course we desire the beautiful. But for Weil, "the beautiful is that which we desire without wishing to eat it." Weil's death, in effect from self-starvation, gives these lines a special poignancy. When I consume something by eating it my digestion breaks it down and assimilates it to myself. What was food becomes me. This may be an act of desire but it is hardly a gesture of love. What Weil is darkly hinting is that "eating," assimilating to ourselves, is what passes for love in the natural realm. We eat our friends and lovers. By contrast, the contemplation of another being in all his reality and independent beauty "lets him be," as light leaves undisturbed the reality of the beloved, revealing without consuming him.

Our desire for the beautiful, however, which is good, is easily corrupted: "We are drawn towards a thing because we believe it is good. We end by being chained to it because it is necessary." In how many popular novels or movies does not a lover say to his beloved that he cannot live without her? The only cure for this, says Weil, is love, but "love is not consolation, it is light." Can we feed our all-too-human hunger, however, on light? Not in the natural realm, the realm of gravity. What is needed is something supernatural, which she calls "grace." "Privation alone," says Weil, "makes one feel his need. And in the event of privation, one cannot help turning to *anything whatever* that is edible. There is only one remedy for that: a chlorophyll conferring the faculty of feeding on light. . ." "A [supernatural] chlorophyll conferring the faculty of feeding on light"—this, surely, is Simone Weil's conception of the divine, and it is as suitable a resting place as any on which to end.

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The Fate of a Generation

GENERATION EXODUS. THE FATE OF YOUNG JEWISH REFUGEES FROM NAZI GERMANY. **By Walter Laqueur.** Brandeis University Press. $29.95.

LAQUEUR'S BOOK TRACES what became of the teenagers among Hitler's refugees who managed to get to America, England or Palestine, to Shanghai, Bolivia, Nepal, Ecuador, or Peru. Now in their seventies and eighties, they then were eager to forget their childhoods. But more recently, as some of them gathered acclaim as writers and statesmen, as academics and scientists, and others grew rich or famous, they not only gloried in their singular achievements, but began to look back at that repressed past—as did many who led relatively undistinguished lives after an extraordinary escape. The spate of their memoirs testifies to the depth of these experiences, their traumatic quality, and the need to make sense of their survival—whether due to inordinate luck or the ability to have seized it.

Laqueur himself completed Gymnasium in Breslau before leaving for Palestine on the eve of *Kristallnacht* (and never again saw his parents), fought in the battle of Jerusalem in 1948, and subsequently became a journalist and a historian, dividing his time between Europe and the United States. He knew many of the people in this book personally, and read hundreds of memoirs and relevant studies. He cites the problems and inaccuracies that must inhere in a portrait of such an amorphous generation when trying to find what the thousands of individual stories had in common, and what distinguished them. He repeatedly states that his conclusions are tentative, that for each example he cites he could have chosen at least ten others, and that early upbringing and predispositions, specific ages and locations of individuals, make it nearly impossible to generalize about those who were rescued.

Wisely, Laqueur begins this tour de force by stating that he focuses on those who were old enough to remember—but not old enough to have finished their studies or be "gainfully employed"—when the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, and after they annexed Austria in 1938. These youngsters came from families that had been in Germany or Austria for centuries, and whose loyalty was to their country, as well as from others who had arrived from Poland before and after World War I; they lived in cities, towns, or villages; went to Jewish or non-Jewish schools; and belonged to orthodox, conservative, and reformed temples. Some had no religious affiliation at all; the families of others had converted before they were born. The Zionists among the older ones learned to

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farm in preparation for life in Palestine; the Communists thought of going East; and the nonpolitical ones, for the most part, looked westward. Most of their families were comfortably middle class, some—as those of the historian George Mosse and George Weidenfeld, among others—were wealthy and renowned, and some were fairly poor. But Germany and Austria were *Heimat* to them all; and so was the German language. More or less suddenly they were ostracized by friends and neighbors, kicked out of schools and universities, and had to scramble for visas to whatever country would have them.

That this "generation" was born between 1914 and 1928, of course, makes sense, given the five years of incremental horror in Germany and the abrupt realization, if not immediately after the Austrian *Anschluss* then after *Kristallnacht*, that escape alone could save them. Laqueur quickly disposes of the ludicrous supposition by a few historians, and by some of the so-called second generation, that they might have left sooner. Such hindsight ignores that during these years of depression, anti-Semitism and fear of competitive labor were rampant everywhere; that most countries' borders were tightly closed after March 1938 if not sooner; and that the Nazis took every precaution to hide their (incrementally passed) "Jewish laws" from their prey, as well as from the rest of the world. Neither Laqueur nor anyone else is able to provide exact statistics; accurate numbers of escapees are unavailable in most countries; many crossed borders illegally, often more than once; and many others did not directly reach their final destinations. And a large number changed their names. (Laqueur bases his approximations on all the obtainable facts.) For instance, among those who settled in the United States, some first went to England, France or Cuba, to Shanghai, Ecuador or Italy, and so on. Among those were the women who left for England as domestics, the ten thousand children who arrived there on a Kindertransport, the few hundred who were allowed into Holland and Belgium (I was among them), and the adventurous ones who made it on their own by crossing the borders of Holland and Switzerland, and the Baltic sea.

Laqueur follows up on what happened after a successful flight, which depended on the political moment, on whether it had been before or after the outbreak of World War II, and on the strength and determination of the local German forces. By the end of 1942, nearly everyone knew that none of those who had been transported to the east had come back, which sent twelve to fifteen thousand Jews from Germany into hiding—with or without false papers. These so-called U-boats changed their identities, impersonated Nazis, and moved from place to place every few days—which was possible only with the help of friends. Fear

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of discovery, of being recognized as Jewish, haunted them at every moment. About 25 to 30 percent of these survived, based on their ingenuity and, most of all, on luck. Finally, each fortuitous story was unique. For them all, it was important not to call attention to themselves, not to look scared or furtive, to walk neither too slowly nor too quickly, and not to look Jewish, which was easier for blond and blue-eyed women than for males of military age.

The story of the flight to Palestine, which was halted by the British in order to try to stop Arab agitation, and the ensuing history of the battle for Jerusalem, are too well known for me to reiterate here. The refugee fighters, so-called *Yekkes*, who took part in the creation of that state were fighting for survival. But elsewhere, too, there were a few resisters, most of whom had been in Communist or Zionist youth groups before 1933. Under German rule opposition was futile. But about three hundred of those hiding in France joined the *maquis*. Among these, Herbert Herz took part in attacks around Grenoble and Toulon; Lothar Martin became a soldier in North Africa, joining in the battle of Bir Hakim, and then of Normandy. Many young refugees participated in the invasion of Europe. In occupied Germany, they helped locate former Nazi honchos, became translators and administrators—some of them in the Secret Service. Indeed, they all had much at stake in rooting out fascism.

To begin with, in Britain as well as in the United States, enemy aliens were drafted but not allowed to carry arms, although before GIs were sent overseas they were given American citizenship. Among the older ones, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann, and Otto Kirchheimer did research for the OSS, while the younger ones, such as John Weitz (the distinguished fashion designer), Werner Angress (later a professor of history), and Ernst Beyer (later a professor of psychology) went to the battlefield. But all of them, even those who might have been ambivalent or nostalgic about their early youth, realized by the time of the Nuremberg trials, in which a few had leading roles, that America was not exile but their new home, their permanent *Heimat*.

Whereas for many years the refugees didn't think of themselves as a distinct group, Laqueur comments on the recently organized get-togethers of, for instance, the former residents of Nuremberg and Fuerth; the pioneers (to Palestine) who hid in Holland; the graduates of various high schools; the group of agricultural trainees of Gross Breesen; those who ended up in Australia; those who (in New York) belonged to the Austro-American Youth group; the Shanghailanders, and so on. The motivations for these reunions appear to be rooted in a wish to recover

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that experience. Laqueur recounts, for example, that the Kindertransport meeting in London began with laughter and smiles, but on the second day lapsed into tearful recall of hidden memories—of having been abused and forced to slave in unloving households. At the time, most of these teenagers were not in the position to give voice to their misery.

Throughout the book, Laqueur mentions many distinguished names. Among them are some who became influential in their new countries: in the American political arena, Michael Blumenthal, who arrived via Shanghai, became a top-ranking member of the Carter administration and now heads the Jewish museum in Berlin; Henry Grunwald was ambassador to his native Austria; Arthur Burns, born in Austrian Galicia, was made ambassador to Bonn; Felix Rohaytan represents the United States in France; and former Secretary of State Madeline Albright was born in Prague. The most influential of that cohort, of course, is Henry Kissinger. He came with his parents from Fuerth, joined the army during World War II and (among many other veterans) took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights on his way to fame. Quite a few refugees—a label they detested—created enterprises, invented industrial techniques and products; became renowned professors and scientists, editors and winners of Nobel Prizes, among other distinctions. They all shared a common background and a common language, had a similar education and understood the same allusions and jokes. Whether their religious origins or practices were worn on their sleeves or denied, they were motivated to adapt to their new country.

There is too much information in this book for me to even mention the fascinating tales of those who landed in West Africa and Israel, in India and Russia, and of those who returned to East Germany. Along with the survivors of Auschwitz, these refugees foiled Hitler's plan to free the world of the "Jewish race." To some extent, I believe, they then felt triumphant to have escaped and, simultaneously, worried about those they left behind—while meeting the challenges of their new country and new language. Psychoanalysts diagnosed them as feeling guilty for having survived. I rather think that they became affectless when emotional tensions and conflicts overwhelmed them; or that they got so used to running that many among them even now are diagnosed as workaholics and overly ambitious. Be that as it may, Laqueur is correct in concluding that whatever the common features of that generation, their fate was different from those who came before and after. What the postrefugee generation and *their* descendants will ultimately remember and make of their lives is up for grabs.

Edith Kurzweil

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Arabesques of Journeys

VERTIGO. **By W. G. Sebald.** Translated by Michael Hulse. New Directions. $23.95.

WHO *is* W. G. SEBALD? Who is the enigmatic German writer who first appeared in English in 1996 with the publication of his elegiac quartet, *The Emigrants*, who reappeared in 1998 with *The Rings of Saturn*, and who now visits us once more with *Vertigo* (his first novel, which, in German, preceded the other two)? Scattered throughout all three books are grainy photographs, and occasionally we glimpse Sebald peering out from behind his weeping-willow mustache. But these snapshots have the odd effect of making him seem not more familiar but more otherworldly, as elusive as the eccentric figures from history who haunt his pages. Sebald guides us through time across Europe. But he is always moving, always just ahead of us, already speaking to us from the shadowy realm of the beyond.

Even the books themselves are evasive: "novel" is an impoverished word to describe Sebald's peculiar alloy of travelogue, fiction, memoir, scholarly essay, and historical investigation. Each derives its meandering form from a journey, or a series of journeys, that Sebald undertakes from England, his adopted country of thirty years. Often the itinerary traces the travels of someone else whom he follows with the tenacity of a detective and the melancholy of an abandoned lover. One journey branches into the recollection of another taken long ago, either by Sebald or one of the phantoms he tracks. The books quickly become arabesques of journeys inside of journeys, lines of motion restlessly crossing and converging in the beautiful terra incognita of Sebald's mind. As we follow him as if he were a Pied Piper, mesmerized by his heartbreakingly beautiful prose, what results is a case of vertigo. The compass points of past and present, reality and memory, absence and presence, truth and fiction, begin to blur and become indistinct.

Webster's definition of "vertigo" is: "(1) a disturbance which is associated with various known diseases or due to unknown causes and in which the external world seems to revolve around the individual or the individual seems to revolve in space; (2) dizziness." The English word is a fair translation of the title of this most recently translated of Sebald's books, called *Schwindel Gefühle* (his variation of the word *Schwindelgefühle*). In fact, one could do worse than describe his as a literature of vertigo: the word captures the sense, central to Sebald, of uneasiness brought on by certain types of motion, a discomfort at once physical

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and mental, impeding further movement. The word "vertigo," with its allusions to a known or unknown illness, also suggests a pervading sense of an ever-encroaching madness. "While it might have been rare for a man to be driven insane, little was required to tip the balance," Sebald writes. In the ramblings of all three books, he follows the story of someone gone mad, though it's usually the gentle madness that comes from retreating into one's own mind.

Sebald is greatly empathic towards those whose lives he trails, and seems to have a particular compassion for those not quite made for life. He himself has a delicate constitution: he suffers from headaches, is easily unsettled, and is at once fascinated and repelled by people, most often strangers with whom he has awkward interactions that usually leave him feeling apprehensive if not gripped by terror. When a waitress brushes his shoulder he recalls "how few and far between" are the moments in his life that he has been touched thus by a woman with whom he was barely acquainted, remarking that "about such unwonted gestures there had always been something disembodied and ghoulish, something that went right through me!" In *The Rings of Saturn*, while observing the nesting holes of some sand martins, he accidentally spies a couple having sex on the beach and they seem to him "a many-limbed, two-headed monster that had drifted in from far out at sea, the last of a prodigious species." To enter into one of Sebald's books is to experience the almost impossibly peculiar, quite vertiginous, sense of inhabiting another's extreme solitude.

Space, always folding back over itself in these travels, is further distorted by these alienating chasms that open between Sebald and those he encounters. Space both fascinates and terrorizes him, at once beckoning to him and disturbing him. "In August 1992," he writes, "when the dog days were drawing to an end, I set off to walk the country of Suffolk, in the hope of dispelling the emptiness that takes hold of me whenever I have completed a long stint of work." But he becomes preoccupied with both an "unaccustomed sense of freedom" and a "paralyzing horror" and ends up, a year to the day that he started the tour, in a hospital in Norwich "in a state of almost total immobility." In Sebald's world, the side effects of motion, of traveling through space and time, are not to be taken lightly. Perhaps the most haunting image in *The Emigrants*—the closest to perfect of the three books, which traces the stories of four twentieth-century Germans of Jewish descent who left their country—is the suicide of Paul Bereyter on the railway tracks. "Railways had always meant a great deal to him," explains the woman with whom Bereyter fell in love at the end of his life, "perhaps

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he felt they were headed for death." We are reminded of the trains that carried so many other Jews to their deaths. These four emigrants are as inextricably bound to those dead as they are to each other by the disturbing state of freedom and regret their own journeys have brought them. The message Sebald repeatedly impresses upon us is: go, but do not expect to go with impunity.

The fourth story in *The Emigrants* is that of Max Ferber, for whom even the shortest train ride is torture. After remaining in Manchester for more than twenty years, he finally brings himself to take a trip to Switzerland, during which he severely injures his back in the act of standing up. In the midst of the crippling pain—"related, in the most precise manner conceivable, to the inner constitution I had acquired over the years"—Ferber begins to remember his youth. One understands then that to remain still—actually petrified—all those years had been a way of staying the onslaught of memory. Sebald himself is susceptible to bouts of paralysis, both physical and mental, often following the disorientation that arises when memory is confronted by reality or when the past becomes an interloper in the present, as when he thinks he recognizes Dante in the streets of Vienna. At these times, he writes, "when obliged to lean against a wall or seek refuge in the doorway of a building, I feared that mental paralysis was beginning to take hold of me, I could think of no way of resisting it but to walk until late into the night, till I was utterly worn out." Traveling is both the cause and cure of the malady—nostalgia, melancholy, vertigo, and even madness—that threatens Sebald and those he shadows. Motion confuses and upsets, but it also fixes things in sharp relief: fleeing one Italian city, he writes, "Not until I am on the train to Milan do I become visible again to my mind's eye."

For Sebald, whose scholarly mind is a log of the ruins of history, the past is always forcing itself upon the present. *Vertigo*, divided like *The Emigrants* into four parts, recounts a journey to Vienna, Venice, Verona, Riva, and finally to Sebald's childhood town in the mountains of southern Germany. The journey progresses, doubles back, and repeats itself, while echoing the travels of Stendhal and Kafka, pausing on the imprisonment of Casanova in Venice, and crossing the paths of countless others. Not only does Sebald spot Dante walking down the street, but also King Ludwig II on a vaporetto; Elizabeth, daughter of James I, boarding a train at Heidelberg Station ("whom I recognized instantly, without a shadow of a doubt"); and—in one of the many humorous moments in the book—twin boys who are the spitting image of Kafka, whose picture he tries in vain to take until he is suspected of pederasty. This indulgence in confusing the identities of strangers with figures of history nods to another kind of mad-

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ness such as Multiple Personality Disorder. And even if Sebald is not quite delusional about his own identity, at the first hotel that allows him to check in without a passport, he signs the guest log as Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, historian, of Landeck Tyrol. At another hotel his passport is mistakenly given to someone else. Although Sebald never really tries to pass himself off as another, he is constantly stepping in and out of other people's shoes. At times he seems to inhabit others more easily than himself. The transitions between his own thoughts and others' are seamless, and one gets the feeling that the W. G. Sebald that appears in his books is only another of the writer's half-real, half-invented characters.

And invention is important. In the original title, Sebald inserts a deliberate break in the word *Schwindelgefühle* (dizzy feeling), so that the word *Schwindel*, which means lie, fraud, swindle, stands alone. The significance of this sly pun should not be lost in translation. Sebald may seem as earnest and unmeddling as a recording angel, but like someone who keeps offering "irrefutable evidence" when one has not expressed disbelief, he invites, even courts, suspicion. He insists, for example, that a certain train ride left no trace on his memory, and then recounts it in almost comically extravagant detail. In the section of the book that follows Stendhal (whom Sebald calls by his real name, Marie Henri Beyle), Sebald drops another hint: "There is reason to suspect that Mme Gherardi, whose life could easily furnish a whole novel, as Beyle writes at one point, never really existed, despite all the documentary evidence." He further adds that it is unclear when Beyle took his journey to Lake Garda, "always supposing that he made it at all." The unfocused and deliberately amateurish photographs shroud the events in mystery. The copies of documents, such as passport pictures or official papers, are sometimes inked out in crucial places. He refers to the town he grew up in only by the initial *W*, and are we really to believe that when he returns for the first time to the house of his childhood and discovers, in what must be one of the finest examples of the *unheimlich*, that it has been turned into an inn, that he, without blinking an eye, checks in? But though Sebald invites us to cast doubt, to continually wonder what is truth or fiction, his narratives are so tightly wrought and confirmed by so many echoes that they are impossible to unravel. Try to locate some palpable truth and you will discover that when you reach for it it turns to dust, like the sleeve of the uniform of an Austrian *chasseur* when Sebald touches it. But if he confuses the boundaries between truth and fiction, past and present, memory and reality, it is not to suggest that boundaries don't exist: they do, only not where you might expect them. On the very last pages of *Vertigo*, he casually wonders why no one is ever

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unnerved by the ominous warning message in the London Underground, that could well be inscribed under Sebald's literary crest: "Mind the gap."

The visual element is a hallmark of his novels, but the sound of Sebald is just as distinctive, finely rendered by the translator, Michael Hulse. To read Sebald is to feel you are inside a place with unusual acoustic effects: now like a seashell, now an antiechoic chamber. In this resonant silence, Sebald himself is like a radio, a crystal set, picking up voices from the past that soon fade into the static. Yet it would be wrong to imply that Sebald is only a medium. Whoever W. G. Sebald may be, he is above all a master of storytelling, an art that requires a degree of charlatanism, the talent of keeping a straight face, and finally, a growing belief in one's own tales until one might even swear by their truth. If Sebald tells us he is obsessed with coincidences, convergences, and echoes, and with "drawing connections between events that lay far apart but which seemed to me to be of the same order," it is because he is constantly honing his alibi. If he experiences vertigo, it may be because he no longer knows where he, W. G. Sebald, ends and his doppelgänger, W. G. Sebald, begins.

So who is W. G. Sebald, this peculiar writer who resurrects figures from the past only to follow them like an undertaker to their deaths; this connoisseur of eccentrics and madmen, of the detritus of history; this poet and swindler who, according to all accounts, doubles as a professor of languages somewhere in the east of England? Whoever he may be, all we can say for sure is that he is restless, and we can only wait until he briefly appears to us again, like one of those phantom creatures rarely sighted, mythical, and easily frightened away.

Nicole Krauss

The Wager of Václav Havel

VÁCLAV HAVEL: A POLITICAL TRAGEDY IN SIX ACTS. **By John Keane.** Basic Books, $27.50.

BACK IN THE 1970S AND 1980S, three East European intellectuals played essential roles in the launching of international debate on Central Europe's destiny and identity, anti-politics, and especially the contribution of civil society initiatives to dismantling terminally sick Leninist regimes. They were Adam Michnik, George Konrád, and Václav Havel

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(though this is not to deny the contributions of then-exiled authors like Leszek Kolakowski, Agnes Heller, or Ferenc Fehér). What makes the Czech president/philosopher/playwright an extraordinary case is the truly unusual intensity of his theoretical reflections, and the fact that, despite many political and personal obstacles, he entered and has remained directly involved in the political game. Havel's refusal to bid farewell to politics is the apparent source of Keane's view of Havel's career as a political "tragedy." Obviously, Havel's commitment is the result of both the local political and cultural environment, as well as the personal calling of a democratic intellectual.

The perception of the political realm as inherently demeaning for the true intellectual is the opposite of Havel's way of grasping and participating in politics. For him, as for Hannah Arendt, the domain of freedom is in danger whenever action and thought part ways. Precisely for this reason, although often contested and fiercely criticized by some among his former dissident colleagues, not to speak of insidiously attacked by those who did little or nothing to bring communism down, Havel has persisted as a moral magistrate of his nation. There is a dose of hubris in the way he plays this part, but can anyone successfully act as the Prince in the absence of such a belief in his or her own mission? Compare Havel to another East European president, Romania's Emil Constantinescu, a critical intellectual of whom many of his fellow countrymen had high expectations. Constantinescu decided not to run again in the 2000 election because he was disgusted with corruption, bickering, and mudslinging. This has not been Havel's choice and, whatever his mistakes, including an inordinate concern with his own family's property rights, he has not given up the main options heralded in his pathbreaking, dissident political writings. Indeed, Havel's position rests on the assumption that politics deprived of critical reflexivity is a futile, preposterous exercise. Speaking about his rival Václav Klaus's allegedly "pragmatic" position, Havel indicated the risks of a politics stripped of moral nerve: "He sees things solely in terms of responsible individuals, the blind laws of the market and a centralized state: everything else he regards as nonsense. It is a very short-sighted political attitude—if not actually suicidal."

John Keane's biography of Havel is an ambitious, idiosyncratic, and often disturbing book. On the one hand, I admire Keane's refusal to engage in hero-worshipping because, as he proudly asserts, his book is an unauthorized, critical biography. On the other hand, the purpose of the whole endeavor is mystifying. Is Keane documenting the tragic predicament of intellectuals involved in turbulent politics? Or is his book an expression of personal frustration with Havel's decision to persevere

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in politics after the rise of unsavory political forces and ideologies in the Czech Republic (market fetishism, national bigotry, various forms of collectivistic tribalism, and xenophobia)? Even the subtitle is problematic: where is the tragedy in a political life in which the main goals of the hero basically have been attained despite handicaps and pitfalls? It is sufficient to reread Havel's essays to realize that in terms of his ultimate political goals, including the reintegration of his country into an undivided European civilization and the dispelling of the Nessus-like ideological shirt, he has succeeded better than any other post-communist politician. If authenticity is the value Havel has advocated, or in the dissident parlance, "living in truth," there is hardly a tragedy in this story. Moreover, to write Havel's obituary in the guise of a biography, as Keane does, is not only premature but also silly.

A political philosopher teaching at the University of Westminster, Keane is the author of a number of seminal works on democracy, civil society, and violence, as well as a remarkable biography of Tom Paine. In the mid-1980s he was the editor of *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in East-Central Europe*, a collection of essays by Havel and other famous Charter 77 activists. In other words, there may be no one better suited than Keane to write a critical, uninhibited biography of the figure most prominently associated with Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution.

The first part of the book is moderate in tone, though too digressive. There are many passages in which Keane expresses appreciation for Havel's accomplishments as a writer, political intellectual, and moral philosopher. But his tone changes as soon as he deals with the post-1989 period. It is as if he had expected Havel to withdraw from the political maelstrom and stay away from the fatally Machiavellian games of party and parliament. While Keane does not write an attack on Havel, there are moments when he expresses personal disappointment in the Czech president's failure to transcend the temptations of power. Nothing seems to bother Keane more than the fact that his hero, the fragile playwright of the absurd, the masterful ironist and self-mocking rebel, has ensconced himself in the Prague presidential castle. But Havel made his existential choice decades before: he chose to be an advocate of certain values, among which the spiritualization of politics, the insertion of meaning and truth into political affairs, and the rehabilitation of trust and tolerance are the most significant. Not to run for reelection only because postcommunist politics is plagued with hatred, envy, and resentment would have been inconsistent with Havel's life-long wager. Albert Camus, not Franz Kafka, offers keys for understanding Havel's decision to remain alive when activity can be a source of despair and terrible disappointment.

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The best and most informative parts of Keane's book deal with Havel's youth, family background, and his relations with the protodissident circles in Antonin Novotny's Stalinist Czechoslovakia. Keane writes vividly about the great expectations of the Prague Spring, the bitter disillusionment following the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968, and Havel's role in the emergence of the *samizdat* culture of the resistance to Husak's regime of "normalization." Absorbing, too, are the pages dedicated to the formation of Charter 77, the ordeals with the secret police, Havel's long years of imprisonment, isolation, discomfiture, and even despondency. Keane documents Havel's crucial role in the articulation of the dissident concept of freedom, including the dynamite notion of the power of the powerless. He explores Havel's dispute with Western pacifists, his insistence on the peculiar nature of Soviet imperialism, his critique of modern instrumental rationality and technological manipulations (not only in Soviet-style regimes).

Much less persuasive are the chapters focused on Havel's postrevolutionary tribulations: in these pages Keane accuses Havel of Machiavellianism, in the pejorative sense, over and over again. The hero of the Velvet Revolution, Keane suggests, has become a victim of his long-concealed attraction to power, the result of psychological features that many of Havel's former friends conveniently recall for his latter-day biographer, and the consequence of political involvement *per se*. In other words, Keane affirms that the Actonian vision of an irresistibly corruptive virus of politics fully applies to Havel's post-1989 career. To remain clean, he should have abandoned the political arena. But Havel has often emphasized that it is precisely because politics can be (and more often than not is) sordid, even tenebrous, that it is important for those who have a vision inspired by trust, transparency, and morality to remain involved. Thus, Keane treats his subject unfairly: there are moments when he writes Havel's name, but in reality must have in mind Václav Klaus or Lech Walesa. In enumerating with bizarre satisfaction Havel's relatively minor peccadilloes, Keane misses the bigger picture, which should have included the Czech thinker's commitment to the preservation of an ethos of civic liberalism, and his unmitigated rejection of the politics of vindictiveness and ethnic discrimination. Where, for example, is a thorough analysis of Havel's role in lambasting the ugly features of the "postcommunist nightmare"? Keane tells little about the conflict between Havel and Klaus, beyond their personal incompatibilities: he overlooks the more important clash of their visions of the role of civil society in the shaping of democratic polities. Indeed, the Havel-Klaus controversy on the nature of an open society is one of

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the most interesting intellectual developments of post–Cold War Europe. Keane also fails to provide a deep analysis of Havel's relentless championship of Euro-Atlantic values in the face of the lack of enthusiasm for this approach among many of his fellow politicians and even former dissidents. For Havel postcommunism remains a cultural and philosophical battlefield plagued with agonizing choices. His commitment to the defense of Reason against waves of collectivistic or individualistic fundamentalisms is exemplary and should not be sardonically dismissed as metaphysical utopianism. The tragedy in Havel's existence, if there is one, bears upon his understanding of the immense threats to genuine human freedom and the decision to oppose them. But isn't the test of the true political man this assumption of responsibility in times of often maddening choices and uncertain outcomes? No matter how one judges some of Havel's more controversial actions, he has been the most successful postcommunist leader. To accuse him of a presidentialist propensity, as Keane does, is a misreading of both his style and belief system.

The most disappointing, indeed irritating, chapter of Keane's book is the last one. Gloomily prophetic, it claims to be a kind of ultimate judgment of Havel's human and political defeat. The events related to the disease he has suffered in recent years, Havel's struggle with the angel of death, are described as symptomatic of alleged narcissistic, neurotic, and arrogant behavior. Hollow and platitudinous phrases abound in what turns out to be a distasteful imagining of Havel's imminent funeral ceremony. For Keane this solemn event, broadcast by global TV networks and attended by the potentates of the day, would be the climax of Havel's search for the establishment of a "crowned republic." Once again, the author indulges in the criticism of what he sees as Havel's main sin: the decision to remain involved in politics. Ironically, Keane criticizes Eda Kriseova's sympathetic biography of Havel, invoking, among other faults, her many factual errors and unmitigated idealization of the president. But Keane, too, exaggerates, approximates, and bases too much of what he relates on gossip, which jeopardizes the accuracy and reliability of his work.

Meant to be a portrayal of a uniquely fascinating political and spiritual destiny in the twentieth century, Keane's book fails to recognize precisely the most important lesson derived from Havel's wager: that irrespective of daunting setbacks and excruciating dilemmas, or perhaps because of them, there is a vital need to fight for the moral rebirth of politics. This is the central meaning of Havel's political action. In spite of his iconoclastic zeal, Keane himself has to acknowledge that his fallible hero has refused to acquiesce to the supremacy of cynicism and the preeminence of greed.

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Subverting many of his own scathing judgments and admitting what he consistently seems to reject, Keane concludes this uneven, gripping, but often exasperating book with a final accolade: "Václav Havel was a man who had the misfortune of being born in the twentieth century, a man who achieved fame as the political figure who taught the world more about power, the powerful and the powerless than most of his twentieth-century rivals." Past tense aside, this is the truest sentence in Keane's book. Regretfully, Havel's political biography remains to be written.

Vladimir Tismaneanu

Naked

DIRTY HAVANA TRILOGY. By Pedro Juan Gutiérrez. Translated by Natasha Wimmer. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $25.00

Dirty Havana Trilogy lives up to its in-your-face title: three breathless sets of short stories pulsating with lust, misery (both physical and emotional), violence, sperm, blood, feces, endlessly sweating heat, tenement garbage, hunger, pilfering, cheating (both State and spouses), general moral collapse, and that most squalid of emotions, lust, which seems to be the only glue in socialist Havana holding man and woman (and man and man and woman and woman) together. This *rich* dirt is both toxic and paradoxically liberating—if you can get it down without gagging. Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, a journalist, became so sick of the socialist-utopian moralizing of the State that he decided to rub his and our noses in the real Havana street. As his chief protagonist, he says:

> For more than twenty years as a journalist, I was never allowed to write with a modicum of respect for my readers, or even the slightest regard for their intelligence. No, I always had to write as if stupid people were reading me, people who needed to be force-fed ideas. And I was rejecting all that. Damning to hell all the elegant prose, the careful avoidance of what might be morally or socially offensive.

Oddly enough, Gutiérrez's prose is an equally effective antigen for a consumerist culture of Prozac and Viagra, in which the politically correct on the left and the wealthy bigots on the right make the oddest bedfellows in their ardor to police our thoughts.

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The elementary lives of his fictive characters are painted in tropical colors: the putrid colors of overripe fruit and spoiled meat, the sensual colors of ebony black skin, all the grades of mulatto and the occasional Caucasian blond, sensually mixed, rubbed together, an explosive-erotic blend. When Pedro Juan isn't shoving a girlfriend out the door to hustle some pallid tourist for a few dollars, he's hustling aged female tourists, "the old lady meat market," until he gets arrested for displaying his merchandise to an elegant foreigner in a pearl necklace. Or he gets beaten up by a Brazilian dyke (who does an *O Globo* cultural column) who's seduced another one of his mulatto girlfriends. Every two or three pages some exchange of human fluids takes place. Yet *Dirty Havana Trilogy*, despite its guttersnipe social set, its raw lust, its emotional depravity, accomplishes a metaphysical or spiritual journey into the dark night of the soul: Pedro Juan Gutiérrez stands revealed in the flesh, sexually and morally *naked*; and Cuba, the courageous little island-nation which has defied the arrogant superpower off its shores for over forty years, is, in the process, stripped *naked*.

"Naked Cuba" deals with the "crisis" that set in after the Cuban-Soviet marriage of convenience went bust in the early nineties. The artificial prices for exported sugar and imported oil were cut off, the safety net ripped apart—and its socialist citizens went into a free fall.

> We had been locked up in a zoo for thirty-five years. We had been given a little food and medicine, but we had no idea what it was like out there beyond the bars. And all of a sudden came the switch to the jungle. Our brains were sleepy and our muscles soft and weak. Only the fittest could hope to survive. I was trying, hard. Very hard.

Nonetheless, this book is radically nonpolitical. Pedro Juan's gaping bafflement at the State's degraded myths: "On the corner there was a huge new billboard. In big, brightly colored letters, it read: 'Cuba, land of men of stature.' In one corner a black athlete leapt against a blue sky. I don't know. It was incomprehensible. . ." is only matched by his contemptuous amusement at liberal-minded European tourists and businessmen, with their profiteering from the new dollar economy and their (un)officially sanctioned flirtation with the cut-rate and flourishing trade of prostitution: "The guy showed every sign of being a European traveler, down to his olive-green backpack. He was an explorer braving the tropical jungle, broadening his horizons by conversing with the native whores. . . .Oh the magnificent tropics, humid and sensuous, within the reach of any budget."

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Pedro Juan is interested in surviving. To the degree that he reduces life to its most basic instincts, he uncovers what is fundamentally human. Paradoxically he discovers in the human debris a quintessential humanity out of reach of the socialist reformers and outside the scope of our own novels of manners. Sexual acts, however lovingly observed or self-indulgent, constitute a form of Cuban *networking*, even when reduced to their detailed, itemized physical elements. For all the heat and passion of the writing, Pedro Juan preserves a kind of floating detachment: the abrupt, impulsive, and variegated copulative acts stitch together a societal tissue as every other kind of social bond has dissolved in the accelerated collapse of a "utopian" society.

When we first meet Pedro Juan we have the classic Latino *macho*. No crack of vulnerability, no self-pity. The sexual predator, the irrepressible seducer. But as the stories unfold, we discover his terrors and his fury of resistance, his unabashed weaknesses and emotional exhaustion. The character Pedro Juan is gradually stripped down to the bare bones of human existence. The erotic veils of sexuality itself are torn aside, when he thinks as he copulates with an older woman, "incredibly fat, with huge flabby tits and a huge flabby ass. . . .It would be like fucking a turtle." An equation of the spirit and the flesh takes shape, a *satori* regarding the fundamentals of human existence, a furious spurning of the superfluous. Rare, disconcerting flashes of a "spiritual" consciousness occur, without the slightest inflection of irony (*de rigueur* for any North American writer in the context of a self-righteous, fundamentalist obsession with wealth and consumption: wealth is virtue. Has anyone noticed that we are drifting toward a mullah-society?). Here it is admissible, in the ambient savagery of a survival ethos. In fact the innocence of such spiritual "oversights" (hardly insights) is in such stark contrast to the culture of ejaculation and bloodshed, of shit-misery and self-mockery, that one is entitled to ask whether this picaresque novel is not really an account of the "night of the soul." The references to spiritual tranquility are elusive, ephemeral—yet direct: "And I keep on struggling against fear. Struggling is what I call it at least. I can't struggle alone. But every night I pray and I ask God to take away my fear and to clear up the confusion in my head."

"I'd take a break and give thanks to God. . .without faith, no matter where you are, life is hell." What North American writer could write these lines? They simply would not be credible in a country where establishment religion is in abject service to mammon. Our conventional religiosity is not at hand here—Pedro Juan in distress resorts to *santeras* and maintains an episodic cult of his *Orisha* statuettes like most of his fellow Cubans.

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There is no epiphany in Pedro Juan's stories. His writing never gets off the ground or out of the dirt; that would give the lie to all these lives. Rather these fictive lives and this writing are a dark if riotous mirror in which some ultimate human essence survives. The brief, fleeting openings to the "spiritual"—without any overtone of irony because in this underworld irony is a civilized tone which is meaningless—are little windows, portholes, through which a gasp of air is drawn.

Gutiérrez's language is brief, with a minimum of qualifiers, stripped of adjectives and adverbs, a style of dirty nouns and violent transitive verbs. "A person lives in chapters," he writes. Each chapter-story is a microdrama, sketched in with a few deft and vivid strokes. The narrative rhythm accelerates to such a tempo that at times it has the staccato of the telegraphic, to pin down quickly the pathetic transiency of the street or the bed: "*I said to hell with it all, and I wrote some naked stories. My stories could run bare-assed into the middle of the street, shouting, 'Freedom, freedom, freedom.'*" Perhaps this is the last word which should be left to Pedro Juan.

Alain Arias-Misson

Are We All Post-Culturalists Now?

FADED MOSAIC: THE EMERGENCE OF POST-CULTURAL AMERICA. By **Christopher Clausen.** Ivan R. Dee. $25.00.

AT THE CONCLUSION of *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture* (2000), a spirited, mordant defense of the Western tradition, Roger Scruton avers that the ending bars of Gustav Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* are "a beautiful proof that Western culture. . .is radically multicultural." Scruton, one of Britain's foremost conservative intellectuals, would hardly be expected to have concern for the imperatives of the multiculturalist ethos. Elsewhere, in fact, he has denounced the politicization of university curricula resulting from the ascendancy of multiculturalism in higher education. As such, his nod to the term displays the great power it now wields. But perhaps the title of Nathan Glazer's explication of American multiculturalism sheds the most light on the authority the movement possesses: *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (1997).

But are we? And, if so, what does that mean? In *Faded Mosaic: The Emergence of Post-Cultural America*, Christopher Clausen, an English

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professor at Pennsylvania State University, argues that we are not "all multiculturalists now"—nor, in essence, have we ever really been. The book could change the nature of the multiculturalist debate. For Clausen hardly delivers a typical screed that excoriates the proponents of multiculturalism. Rather, he proves just as critical of "assimilationist" stances as he does of the "diversity" apparatchiks.

Clausen's criticisms of the multiculturalist project are novel precisely because he does not find fault with the tenets of the movement, but doubts the very existence of multiculturalism in American life. True multiculturalism, he argues, would demand an understanding of and immersion in cultures so radically different that deference to all of them would cause major rifts in society. How could one abide by the caste system of India and the individualism of the Renaissance, and remain true to the spirit of both? In essence, it can't be done. Proponents of multiculturalism don't earnestly desire Americans to delve into the heart of the world's myriad cultures; they yearn for something else—something much less involved and disconcerting than true multiculturalism.

Indeed, the end result of America's infatuation with other cultures is a superficial and thoughtless concern for the artifacts and ephemeralities of non-Western societies that grant one a false sense of kinship with "oppressed" peoples. This, Clausen demonstrates, is a far cry from true multiculturalism.

Clausen also offers criticisms of "cultural relativism," a notion intrinsically linked to the spirit of multiculturalism. Having traced its origin to classical anthropologists, he argues that

> What cultural relativism now usually amounts to in practice is that only those aspects of non-European cultures that seem most compatible with Western feminism and at least a minimal notion of human rights are held up as examples of diversity. Few American multiculturalists are enthusiastic about the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia. . .or, worse yet, Afghanistan under the Taliban.

Thus we find that, according to the true spirit of so-called multiculturalism, cultural relativism goes only so far, and is a highly selective endeavor. Multiculturalism itself, furthermore, compels its followers to survey a mere patina of non-Western cultures.

Conservative critics have argued many of these points before, placing special emphasis on practices such as female genital mutilation in parts of Africa and ritual female immolation in India as a means to discount

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the multiculturalist project. But never before has the entire movement of multiculturalism appeared so simplistic, so ephemeral, so bankrupt.

And Clausen's criticisms of the multiculturalist project do not end there. He realizes that most Americans have, in recent years, become less and less tied to their own cultural moorings. "For all but a tiny proportion of the North American population," he writes, "the connection with an ancestral culture is now so vestigial that whether to assert or ignore it has become entirely a matter of choice." Finding increasing mobility and ever-improving technology in large part responsible for this predicament, Clausen implicitly links the weakening of cultural mores to a vision of the world's future associated with Marshall McLuhan's "global village."

Thus committed multiculturalists are championing sundry distinct cultures precisely when the distinctiveness of these cultures is fading from American life. In this sense, multiculturalism's supposed embrace of non-Westerners is a backward-looking endeavor: it celebrates cultures as their hard-and-fast distinctions die away.

For this reason, Clausen proves critical of the defenders of American assimilation—those who promote the "melting pot" vision of immigration. To what are new citizens asked to assimilate? Indeed, in a time in which the imperatives of all cultures have drastically weakened, the dominant WASP culture of America has by no means escaped this lessening of influence. Americans hardly live in a rigid, monolithic country, as cultural studies gurus assert; rather, posits Clausen, they inhabit a "post-cultural" world—a world more afflicted by ennui than by the rigid demands of any given culture.

Though Clausen's critique of multiculturalism is powerful and compelling, his tracing of the origins of post-culturalism seems less convincing. By claiming that technology and a strong central government are chiefly responsible for the rise of cultural relativism, Clausen gives short shrift to the avant-garde Parisian intellectuals who outlined many of the precepts Americans now hold dear—albeit in watered-down form. One can understand why Clausen chooses to do this; ever since Allan Bloom, in *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), argued that Foucault, Barthes, et al. were "Nietzsches of the left" in order to excoriate the views of American radicals, conservative critics have harped on the influence of these thinkers, often finding them responsible for the ideology of multiculturalism and political correctness. Clausen, perhaps wishing to grant his critique a greater degree of originality, distances his work from these arguments.

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But this does not mean that these continental thinkers had as little effect on modern cultural life as Clausen claims. In fact, many Americans who unthinkingly believe in the multiculturalist project would be aghast to discover the link between multiculturalism and the views of Foucault, Barthes, and their peers—views they would generally regard as repellent.

Indeed, Clausen chooses to focus mostly on the structural and cultural causes for what he terms post-culturalism at the expense of intellectual issues. Thus he—like unreflective partisans of multiculturalism—does not mention the long tradition of Western self-criticism that results from an examination of other cultures. In fact, deference to other cultures, traceable even in Herodotus's *Histories*, plays a large part in the intellectual history of the West, and can be discovered in important works of Western thought, by such authors as Michel de Montaigne and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In a sense, then, Americans are not stranded in a post-cultural world; rather, they are following a well-worn path in their supposedly new-found concern for non-Western cultures. It is not surprising that this recent emphasis on "diversity" and multiculturalism has been the preoccupation of Westerners; it would be startling if, say, Iran, given its intellectual traditions, were the home of radical multiculturalists. Clausen's failure to discuss this issue makes his argument tread dangerously close to the ahistorical rants of multiculturalism's devotees.

One can, moreover, quibble with Clausen's neologism, "post-cultural." Can a society ever be truly "post-cultural"? Perhaps "post-traditional" would be a more accurate, though less sexy, adjective, but even it fails to convey the heart of American cultural life—a life infected by an unhealthy dollop of faux multiculturalism and a smidgen of self-serving cultural relativism.

Despite these flaws, *Faded Mosaic* is a crucial addition to the multiculturalist debate. For Clausen's depiction does not simply highlight the divisiveness usually considered a result of the multiculturalist worldview; rather, it questions the legitimacy of the entire enterprise. Though it would be foolish to assert—even wryly—that "we are all post-culturalists now," *Faded Mosaic* describes aspects of modern American life with a disheartening accuracy.

Eric Adler

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British Enlightenment

THE CREATION OF THE MODERN WORLD: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE BRITISH ENLIGHTENMENT. By Roy Porter. W.W. Norton. $35.00.

ROY PORTER IS A SEEMINGLY indefatigable historian who is primarily known for his work in the history of medicine, but he has also written books on English history. Two years after publishing both *London: A Social History* and *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity*, he has now weighed in with another ambitious book—a social and intellectual history of eighteenth-century Britain entitled *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment*. The British title, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, is more accurate. The notion that Porter's book offers "the untold story" is misleading because in recent decades much has been written about the Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment, and many of these works are cited by Porter himself in his seventy-seven-page bibliography.

Porter persuasively makes the case for the importance of the British Enlightenment. (Some observers speak of separate Scottish and English Enlightenments but Porter rightly argues that "to draw rigid distinctions between the English and Scottish enlightened traditions" doesn't make sense because "English and Scottish thinkers were in constant dialogue.") Eighteenth-century Britain not only saw the rise of what came to be called capitalism, it was also home to a number of thinkers who offered, as he says, "a profound revaluation. . .in the understanding of economic activity itself." Those who revaluated economic activity include not only Hume and Smith but also Addison, Mandeville, and Johnson.

Porter argues that postmodernist, Foucauldian readings of Enlightenment thought are "wilfully lopsided." According to him, the postmodernist view that under the guise of progress and reason the Enlightenment's leading figures wanted to oppress and punish citizens in order to control them is misguided. A more accurate estimate of British Enlightenment thinkers comes from their contemporaries on the Continent. The leading French *philosophes*—indeed enlightened thinkers throughout eighteenth-century Europe—praised Britain as the most modern country in Europe. They admired its writers, especially Shaftesbury, Addison, Hume, and Richardson. They praised its free press, its religious toleration, and its profusion of coffeehouses, which the Abbé Prévost remarked are "the seats of English liberty" because there you can "see a lord, or two, a baronet, a shoemaker, a tailor, a wine-mer-

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chant. . .poring over the same newspapers." They said that Britain made the best clocks, watches, barometers, thermometers, and air pumps; and they noted that its streetlighting, especially in London, was far superior to the streetlighting of Continental cities; a Prussian visitor said that "in Oxford-street alone there are more lamps than in all Paris."

Though at times Porter's prose is breathless and trite—a new century is dawning, a new future is being forged—his book, which builds on his earlier *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1990), is excellent social history. Unfortunately, it has serious flaws as a work of intellectual history. One problem is Porter's chronology. Most observers would agree with his contention that the Enlightenment in England began with the Glorious Revolution, but many would be puzzled by his assumption that the Enlightenment lasted until the second decade of the nineteenth century, for he quotes a number of early-nineteenth-century writers and speaks of "enlightened men like Hazlitt." Perhaps a case can be made for a "long" British Enlightenment, though it would seem that all changed utterly with the French Revolution, but Porter doesn't make that case.

Such a long British Enlightenment, which Porter loosely divides into early and late stages, enables him to range far and wide in his citations, so that in a discussion of anticlericalism he quotes a poem by Dryden written in 1681 and two paragraphs later quotes from the poet John Clare's journal, written in 1824. Our sense of historical context is blurred when writers who lived more than a century apart are quoted to support a particular argument. And sometimes, perhaps owing to the profusion of quotations from such varied sources, the argument is not clear. A case in point are two paragraphs in which Porter argues that one characteristic of the British Enlightenment in its late stage was a strong distaste for the Establishment—or what he calls "that nexus of aristocratic capitalism, landed and commercial power, title and wealth, backed by the monster oligarchic state. . . ." To buttress his argument, he first quotes two turn-of-the-century radicals, William Cobbett and William Godwin, then in the next paragraph he moves back in time, quoting Johnson, Hume, and Smith because they disdained "dependence"—or patronage. But the latter three pro-Establishment writers would have disliked the politics of Cobbett and Godwin. Under the rubric of reform, Porter has yoked together very different issues: the question of Britain's ruling Whig oligarchy and the question of patronage.

At times Porter's argument is simply wrong. In a chapter on women and the British Enlightenment, he says that Johnson "of course disparaged female pretensions. . . ." To back up this point, he cites Johnson's

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famous remark about the unnaturalness of women preachers as well as the fact that no female authors were included in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. The "of course" implies that a crusty Tory like Johnson would naturally take a dim view of women with intellectual pretensions, but Johnson strongly defended the intellectual ambition of women and he admired many women essayists, critics, and novelists. Two essays in the *Rambler* were written by his friend Elizabeth Carter, a classical scholar. One wonders how much of Johnson Porter has read, since the vast majority of his quotations are from Boswell's *Life*. If he had read a number of Johnson's essays in the *Oxford Sanuel Johnson* or Eithne Henson's essay on "Johnson and the condition of women" in the *Cambridge Guide to Johnson* he would have seen that Johnson always attacked the prevailing view that women should not be given a solid education.

Johnson is only a minor figure in Porter's study. More troubling is his discussion of two major figures: Hume and Smith. Porter argues that both writers opposed all aspects of the civic humanist tradition that one associates with the Tories and radical Whigs who opposed Robert Walpole. The writers in this tradition usually attacked commerce as a source of corruption and they also stressed the importance of disinterested men—Patriots—who can discern the public good. According to Porter, Hume and Smith thought "the proper stage for human energies was not the public or political arena. . .but private, self-regarding pursuits." But neither Hume nor Smith thought Britain would flourish if disinterested politicians took a backseat to self-interested men of commerce. Disinterested statesmen—men of enlightened opinions and extensive views—were necessary to foster commerce and mitigate some of its harmful effects. Smith continually warns that self-interested merchants inevitably want "to narrow the competition." Both Hume's essays and Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* are addressed to politicians—trying to persuade them that if impediments to trade are reduced Britain is likely to be more prosperous and more politically stable. It is a serious distortion of Hume and Smith to say that they helped put "*laissez-faire* in the saddle."

Finally, though Porter ends his book by stressing that there was a *Kulturkampf* in eighteenth-century Britain, a fierce debate about many issues, he does not adequately describe what J. G. A. Pocock has called the "family quarrels" among various thinkers whom we label enlightened. Porter says that "progress proved the ultimate Enlightenment gospel," but different enlightened thinkers had different ideas about what constituted progress. He speaks of the "early Enlightenment liberty platform," but the "Patriots" who supported progress in liberty usually attacked economic progress.

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Porter's failure to adequately track the British Enlightenment's family quarrels results in a one-sided survey of late-Enlightenment thought. He speaks of the late Enlightenment's cult of sensibility as well as "late Enlightenment perfectibilism," which is most apparent in the thought of three radical reformers: Joseph Priestley, Richard Price, and Thomas Paine. These writers did become increasingly important, but at the same time there was growing support for the monarchy, since King George III was very popular. Moreover, during this period other enlightened writers, notably Gibbon and Smith, criticized the cult of sensibility and attacked the political ideas of Price and Priestley.

Porter not only assumes that perfectibilism is the main current of late-Enlightenment thought, he also argues that "friends of enlightenment became friends of the [French] Revolution." If this were the case then Smith and Gibbon—both disciples of Hume, both strong proponents of progress—must be relegated to the counter-Enlightenment because Gibbon attacked the Revolution in his letters and Smith raised questions about it—albeit in veiled form—in the last edition of *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In their view the Revolution marked the end of progress because a new form of enthusiasm had triumphed. Who, one wonders, is more progressive—the urbane unbeliever Gibbon or the enthusiastic Priestley, who was convinced the Revolution was a positive development because he thought it had been foretold in the prophetic books of the Bible?

Perhaps because Porter makes too much of perfectibilist thought, he ends with a generalization about the British Enlightenment that is wide of the mark. He quotes Hazlitt's praise of a minor late-Enlightenment writer who "believed that truth had a natural superiority over error, if it could only be heard; that if once discovered, it must, being left to itself, soon spread and triumph." Then he says that Hazlitt's remark is an accurate summary of the ideals of "the British Enlightenment at large." Not so. It is an accurate summary only of Price's, Priestley's, and Paine's ideas. Hume, Smith, and Gibbon would have criticized the notion that there could ever be a consensus about truth in the realm of public affairs. Smith and Gibbon agreed with Hume's remark that governments are based on opinion, not truth, and they agreed with Hume's assertion that "the bulk of mankind [is]. . .governed by authority, not reason." In their view humankind would always be prey to unaccountable enthusiasms that were destructive of public order.

Of course we could say that Hume, Smith, and Gibbon should be ruled out of the British Enlightenment because they were enemies of perfectibilism, but Porter himself regards Hume and Smith as central

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figures. In sum, Porter's book does not adequately clarify the ongoing debate among British Enlightenment thinkers about the nature and scope of progress, yet his book is definitely worth reading for its wealth of information about the period, its rich supply of quotations, and its excellent bibliography.

Stephen Miller

Willa Cather's Critics

WILLA CATHER AND THE POLITICS OF CRITICISM. By Joan Acocella. University of Nebraska Press. $20.00.

Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism is only ninety-four pages long, yet it amounts to a devastating critique of academic criticism—and by extension, the fate of literary studies in the university during the last thirty years. Opinions of Cather's work have mirrored the vagaries in critical fashion throughout much of the past century, and Acocella examines every scholarly folly and the effect each has had on the estimation of Cather's powerful novels and stories.

According to Acocella, there was only a brief period in the novelist's early career when she was regarded as what she has always been—one of this country's classic writers. This was the judgment of the young literary critics of the period (the 1910s), foremost among them H. L. Mencken, Randolph Bourne, and Van Wyck Brooks. They were searching for something authentically American in literature, and Cather's *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*, along with works by other naturalists—Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis—fit the bill. Mencken, in fact, put Cather in "the front rank of American novelists."

Yet, by the 1920s, when Cather entered upon her great middle period, which saw the creation of *A Lost Lady*, *The Professor's House*, and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, the literary terrain had already shifted, and not in her favor. As Acocella notes, Edmund Wilson had replaced Mencken as the grand pooh-bah of criticism and for him and like-minded types, "Cather was already marked as old-fashioned by her prairie novels," which meant that none of her finest works received the kinds of notices they deserved.

Condescended to in the 1920s, Cather was then attacked head-on in the '30s, when the literary scene changed yet again, and all the bright

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young literary stars were espousing some form of Marxism. Cather seemed to them not just old-fashioned but procrustean in her political and personal conservatism. Under the attack, Cather withdrew from public life and began jealously guarding her privacy. By the time of her death in 1947, she was considered at best a very minor novelist.

Things didn't get much better, Acocella notes, in the two decades following the writer's death. "Basically," writes Acocella, "[Cather's] admirers gathered up her abused corpse and took it back to their fort, while the rest of the critical establishment forgot about her." Cather scholarship, through the end of the 1960s, was little more than "a small backwater."

The scholarly circus didn't really get under way until the 1970s and the advent of feminist criticism in the academy. Feminist literary critics needed desperately to create a "female canon," what Acocella so accurately describes as "a list of first-rate woman-authored books that would demonstrate that women were the equal of men as writers and therefore that their underrepresentation in the approved catalog of great literature. . .was the result of politics, not biology." For it all to work, these writers also had to be ardent feminists.

Cather was, of course, considered important to the success of the canon, but there was a stumbling block. She was not a feminist, not by the evidence of her mature novels, not in her personal and literary pronouncements, nor in the way she conducted her life.

"So Cather," writes Acocella, "having once looked as though she might advance the cause of feminism, turned out to be a disaster." A number of feminists condemned her as such, Acocella tells us, while others, sad to lose a writer of such caliber, searched for something to solve the problem, "some stick of dynamite, to blow Cather's world open. As feminists soon realized, the thing they needed was already there. In a 1975 book called *Lesbian Images*, Jane Rule, a Canadian novelist and critic, had matter-of-factly declared that Cather was homosexual."

There it was—the solution to the problem, and Acocella shows how this new "insight" was used to redeem Cather and assign her a commanding spot in the canon. It didn't matter at all whether the notion could be proven conclusively or whether it might, in the end, not even be true. The feminists "made it work."

Acocella provides a whole chapter filled with examples, culled from essay after essay and book after book, showing how this misguided formula was applied to Cather's novels and her life to make them something they are not. These passages provide a potent indictment of how literature has been used in the academic world to serve neither art nor truth, but rather a preset political agenda. The egregious nature of such

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interpretations would be comical if they hadn't already had a deleterious effect on the study of literature in the universities.

Cather's one stroke of good luck in all this has been her devoted following of readers over the years, as well as the fact that she always had the esteem of her fellow writers, in her lifetime and long after.

And now there is Acocella's book, which would be important if all it did was expose this scholarly farce. But it does so much more than simply rescue Cather's work from the web of politicized rhetoric.

Cather was never really a fashionable writer, at any time in her career, and seems even less so in these hedonistic days. It was her belief that true greatness was to be found only in the past, and so she basically wrote elegies to all that was lost when, in her words, "the world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts." Her novels and stories are populated with characters who must make sacrifices in their lives, and through these sacrifices gain in strength, whether it be Antonia Shimerda in *My Antonia*, trying to make a patch of the plains respond to her civilizing efforts, or Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark,* who must deny herself a normal life for the sake of her art and thereby triumph, no matter who and what must be discarded along the way.

Generally, we ask that literary criticism be insightful, that it leave us with a new understanding or appreciation of a writer we admire. Rarely does it have the power to move us as the best fiction does. But that is what Acocella achieves in the final chapters of her book, and especially in chapter eight, entitled "The Tragic Sense of Life." Here the critic discusses Cather's lifelong sense of being in exile, which dated from her family's move from her beloved Virginia homestead to Red Cloud, Nebraska, which Cather described as "a country as bare as a piece of sheet iron." In a skillful weaving of quotations and insights, Acocella creates literary criticism that lives, that exists as the very extension of the work it considers—which is to say, criticism of the highest order.

Robert Leiter

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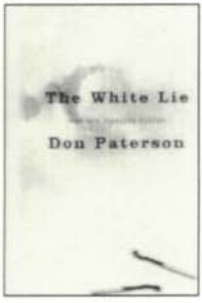

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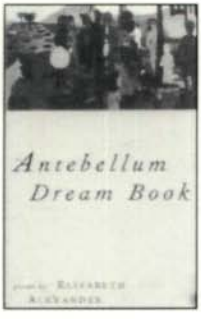

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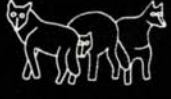

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